

1 The use of player physical and technical **skill** match activity profiles to predict position in the  
2 Australian Football League draft

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5 **Woods T. Carl<sup>a\*</sup>, Veale P. James<sup>b</sup>, Collier Neil<sup>c</sup>, Robertson Sam<sup>d</sup>**

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8 *<sup>a</sup>Discipline of Sport and Exercise Science, James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland, Australia*

9 *<sup>b</sup>Australian Football League, Melbourne, Australia*

10 *<sup>c</sup>Faculty of Sustainability, Leuphana University Luneburg, Germany*

11 *<sup>d</sup>Institute of Sport, Exercise & Active Living, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia*

12

13 \*Corresponding Author

14 Carl Woods, Discipline of Sport and Exercise Science, James Cook University, Townsville,  
15 Queensland, Australia.

16 Ph: +61 08 4781 6550 Mob: +61 421254329 Email: carl.woods@jcu.edu.au

17 **Abstract**

18 This study investigated the extent to which position in the Australian Football League (AFL) **national**  
19 draft is associated with individual game performance metrics. Physical / technical skill performance  
20 metrics were collated from all participants in the 2014 national **under 18 (U18)** championships (18  
21 games) drafted into the AFL ( $n = 65$ ;  $17.8 \pm 0.5$  y); 232 observations. Players were subdivided into  
22 draft position (ranked one to 65) and then draft round (one to four). **Here, earlier draft selection (i.e.,**  
23 **closer to one) reflects a more desirable player.** Microtechnology and a commercial provider facilitated  
24 the quantification of individual game performance metrics ( $n = 16$ ). Linear mixed models were fitted  
25 to data, modelling the extent to which draft position was associated with these metrics. Draft position  
26 in the first / second round was negatively associated with “contested possessions” and “contested  
27 marks”, respectively. Physical performance metrics were positively associated with draft position in  
28 these rounds. Correlations weakened for the third / fourth rounds. Contested possessions / marks were  
29 associated with an earlier draft selection. Physical performance metrics were associated with a later  
30 draft selection. Recruiters change the type of U18 player they draft as the selection pool reduces.  
31 Juniors with contested skill appear prioritised.

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33 *Key words:* Talent selection; Predictive modelling; Notational analytics; Performance analysis;  
34 Recruiting

35 **Introduction**

36 The Australian Football League (AFL), similar to other elite team sporting organisations around the  
37 world, hosts an annual draft. The main focus of the draft is to provide AFL teams with the opportunity  
38 to select players (predominately 18 years of age; the age a player is first draft eligible) whom they  
39 believe may contribute to their team’s immediate and long-term performance. The draft also acts as  
40 one of several equalisation strategies implemented by the AFL to promote fairness and  
41 competitiveness across all 18 teams. Other equalisation measures include a stringent **player** salary cap,  
42 and a recently implemented measure to control off-field football department spending (**e.g. football**  
43 **department wages**).

44 This talent selection process (defined as choosing the most appropriate individual or group of  
45 individuals to perform a specific task) (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaerts, 2008; Williams &  
46 Reilly, 2000) is critical for AFL teams to maintain and improve their competitive advantage over  
47 other clubs. Although each organisation is eligible to recruit talent within the draft, the order of their  
48 selection is **largely** based on their ladder position at the conclusion of the previous AFL season. More  
49 directly, AFL teams ranked lower on the ladder at the conclusion of the previous season (i.e., poorer  
50 performing teams) are given draft picks early in the selection sequence, and superior performing clubs  
51 receive selections later in the sequence. **This selection sequence process is designed to provide**  
52 **relatively poorer performing teams with the opportunity to build a more competitive playing roster.**  
53 **Thus, players selected earlier in the draft sequence (i.e., a lower selection number) may be more**  
54 **sought after by an AFL team. Specifically, they could be expected to possess more desirable**  
55 **performance characteristics relative to their counterparts drafted later in the sequence (i.e., a higher**  
56 **selection number). However, these desirable performance characteristics are yet to be objectively**  
57 **elucidated within the literature.**

58 This draft selection sequencing generates an environment where teams must strategize in  
59 order to optimise their capped number of selections. Hence, teams often look to acquire meaningful,  
60 objective performance data on each draft nominated player to help inform and/or confirm potential  
61 selections. To partially facilitate this process, the AFL has established an elite Under 18 (U18)

62 national championship competition. First commencing in 1995, this event consists of talent identified  
63 (defined through selection onto a State Academy program) U18 players representing their state in a  
64 four-to-six week tournament. These matches provide AFL recruiters the opportunity to observe the  
65 best available junior talent and apply their subjective expertise in the hope of identifying suitable draft  
66 choices (Burgess, Naughton, & Norton, 2012).

67 The continued development of sport-oriented performance analysis microtechnology, **such as**  
68 global positioning systems (GPS), has provided an additional source of information for AFL  
69 recruiters; objectively complementing their subjective perceptions generated through game-play  
70 observation. Specifically, GPS technology has facilitated in-depth analyses into the physical match  
71 activity profiles of Australian football (AF) players (Brewer, Dawson, Heasman, Stewart, & Cormack,  
72 2010; Coutts, Quin, Hocking, Castagna, & Rampinini, 2009; Wisbey, Montgomery, Pyne, & Rattray,  
73 2010). Given the intermittent and prolonged physical nature of AF game-play, the more common  
74 **physical performance metrics (indicators of physical actions)** derived from the use of GPS technology  
75 include total or absolute distance (**metre; m**), relative distance (**metre per minute; m.min<sup>-1</sup>**), and high  
76 intensity running distance (**metres covered >15 km.hr<sup>-1</sup>**) (Burgess et al., 2012; Jennings, Cormack,  
77 Coutts, Boyd, & Aughey, 2010). This performance analysis microtechnology is currently used within  
78 the national U18 championships.

79 Given the multi-dimensional qualities required by AF players, physical performance reflects  
80 only one element of effective play (Woods, Raynor, Bruce, McDonald, & Collier, 2015). For instance,  
81 players must possess proficient **technical skill qualities that broadly encapsulate different aspects of**  
82 **ball disposal (e.g. kicking and/or handballing under certain environmental contexts)** (Tangalos,  
83 Robertson, Spittle, & Gustin, 2015; Robertson, Back, & Bartlett, 2015). Thus, to provide AFL  
84 recruiters with the objective data to complement their subjective perceptions of a players technical  
85 skill, a commercial statistical provider; namely Champion Data<sup>®</sup> (Champion Data<sup>®</sup>, Melbourne,  
86 Australia), conducts notational analyses on the **technical skill involvements** of players within the  
87 national U18 championships. Given the broad types of technical **skill** involvements players encounter  
88 during game-play (Tangalos et al., 2015), these notations are generally inclusive of the total number

89 of ball disposal involvements (total possessions), contested possessions (total possessions obtained  
90 when pressured from opponents), inside 50's (attacking passage of play), and clearances (total  
91 possessions obtained clearing the ball from a contest).

92 Woods, Joyce and Robertson (2015) recently demonstrated that players drafted into the AFL  
93 accrued a greater count of technical skill involvements (defined by a greater number of inside 50's  
94 and contested possessions) in comparison to their non-drafted counterparts. Similarly, Burgess,  
95 Naughton and Hopkins (2012) observed an interaction between physical and technical performance  
96 qualities and draft selection (selected, non-selected) in U18 AF players. However, although insightful,  
97 these studies did not investigate the extent to which physical and/or technical skill performance  
98 metrics quantified during game-play were associated with draft position (i.e., the gradient of player  
99 skill level within the pool of drafted players). This warrants further research, as identifying match  
100 activity profiles that may lead to a higher draft position could hold important implications for training  
101 interventions in youth AF competitions, as well as the talent selection strategies utilised by AFL  
102 recruiters to optimise their draft picks. We hypothesise that superior technical skill and physical  
103 performances in game-play will be meaningfully associated with higher draft position, as such players  
104 are likely to provide immediate and long-term benefits to an AFL club. This investigation aims to  
105 determine the extent to which draft position is associated with a player's physical and/or technical  
106 skill match activity profile.

## 107 **Methodology**

108 In-game physical and technical skill performance metrics were collated for all participants in the 2014  
109 national U18 championships that were subsequently drafted into the AFL at the conclusion of the  
110 2014 season ( $n = 65$ ;  $17.8 \pm 0.5$  y) within the national draft. These drafted players were selected from  
111 a total sample of 244 players playing within the U18 national championships. These data originated  
112 from all 18 championship games; resulting in a total of 232 player observations. Players were  
113 subdivided into draft position based upon selection number (ranked one to 65) and round (ranked one  
114 to seven); with this information being retrieved from a commercially accessible website  
115 (<http://www.afl.com.au/draft/draft-tracker>). Of these 232 observations, 76 were contributed from draft

116 round one, 67 from draft round two, 50 from draft round three, 26 from draft round four, 5 from draft  
117 round five, 4 from draft round six, and 4 from draft round seven. The uneven observational spread  
118 was due to the continual reduction in the potential talent selection pool, and was thus inevitable.  
119 Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee.

120 As a part of participation in the 2014 national U18 championships, each player was required  
121 to wear a portable GPS unit (Catapult Innovations, Team Sport 5.0, Firmware 6.54, 10 Hz,  
122 Melbourne, Australia) located between the scapulae and embedded within a pouch in their uniform.  
123 Although players originated from different State Academy programs, the GPS units and  
124 corresponding firmware were the same, and where possible, players wore the same GPS unit during  
125 each game. These data were downloaded after each game by the State Academy support staff using  
126 the propriety analysis software (Catapult Sprint Version 5.0.92, Melbourne, Australia) and exported to  
127 Excel as a .csv file (Microsoft, Redmond, USA) for analysis. Only active playing time was analysed,  
128 and as such, quarter breaks and interchange periods for each player were omitted prior to analysis.  
129 The same physical performance metrics described by Woods et al. (2015) were used to quantify the  
130 player's physical match activity profile, and were inclusive of absolute distance (m); relative distance  
131 ( $\text{m}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ); high speed running distance ( $\text{m} >15 \text{ km}\cdot\text{hr}^{-1}$ ), and high speed running distance expressed as  
132 a percentage of absolute distance ( $\%\text{total} >15 \text{ km}\cdot\text{hr}^{-1}$ ). These have been shown to be the most  
133 clinimetrically robust when compared to other GPS-derived metrics (Jennings et al., 2010).

134 A similar selection of technical skill performance metrics as described by Woods et al. (2015)  
135 were supplied from a commercial notational provider (Champion Data<sup>®</sup>, Melbourne, Australia). The  
136 data supplied by this provider to the AFL Talent Pathway is part of a broader commercial agreement  
137 with the AFL. These notations and their corresponding descriptions are presented in Table I. The  
138 notational analysis conducted by this provider is considered clinimetrically acceptable  
139 (O'Shaughnessy, 2006). The data were then entered into a custom designed Excel spreadsheet  
140 (Microsoft, Redmond, USA) for analysis.

141 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\*\*

142 Descriptive statistics (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation) for each physical and technical skill  
143 performance metric were calculated for each drafted round. We first modelled the relationship  
144 between draft round and player physical and technical skill performances. To do this, we built a set of  
145 sixteen single-term models with each performance metric coded as a predictor variable and draft  
146 round was the response variable. Cumulative logistic mixed models were used for this part of the  
147 analyses and were implemented using the ‘ordinal’ package within the *R* computing environment  
148 (version 3.1.3 *R* Core Team, 2014). Cumulative logistic mixed models are a form of ordered  
149 regression models and are used when the response data are categorical and have some type of order or  
150 sequence. This modelling framework extends the typical ordinal regression model to include random  
151 effects, and in our case, this allows us to model the data with respect to repeated measurements on the  
152 same subjects (players) through time (games). The data were centred and scaled before analysis and  
153 sub-setted to include only the first four rounds of the draft, due to low numbers of observations in  
154 rounds five to seven. ‘Player’ was included as a random effects term in all models and the Adaptive  
155 Gauss-Hermite Quadrature (nAGQ) value was set to 10. The confidence intervals of the model  
156 parameter estimates were calculated using the *confint* function, with ‘*P*-values’ estimated using  
157 Wald’s method.

158 We also modelled the relationship between a players physical and technical skill  
159 performances and the position *within* the first draft round. We built a set of sixteen single-term models  
160 using a performance metric as the response variable and first round draft position as the predictor  
161 variable. Linear mixed modelling was used for this part of the analysis. The models were fitted to the  
162 data using the *lme4* package (Bates, Maechler, Bolker et al., 2014), also within *R* (*R* Core Team,  
163 2014). These data were centred and scaled prior to analysis to assist model convergence (Bates et al.,  
164 2014). Performance metric was the response variable and draft position was the fixed effect for each  
165 model built. ‘Player’ was included as a random effect, taking into account the repeated measurements  
166 with subjects. A Gaussian distribution was assumed for the error. All data were visualised using  
167 *ggplot2* (Wickham, 2009).

168 Finally, we modelled the relationship between a player's position *within a draft round* and  
169 *their physical and technical skill performances*. Again, a set of sixteen single-term models were built  
170 for each draft round using the same response and predictor variables as described previously. *These*  
171 linear mixed models were fitted to the draft round data using the same package and statistical  
172 computing environment as defined in the previous paragraph, *and produced a set of 64 models*. The  
173 data were again centred and scaled prior to analysis to assist with model convergence (Bates et al.,  
174 2014). In these models, performance metric was coded as the response variable, and draft position  
175 was the fixed effect. A Gaussian distribution was again assumed for the error.

## 176 **Results**

177 *The descriptive statistics for each physical and technical skill performance metric across draft rounds*  
178 *one to four is displayed in Table II. None of the physical or technical skill performance metrics were*  
179 *able to meaningfully predict the round in which a player was drafted (one to four) (Figure I).*  
180 However, within the first draft round, a significant negative correlation was noted between contested  
181 possessions and draft position (Table III); with a players performance in this metric decreasing as  
182 draft selection in the first round increased. Conversely, a significant positive correlation between  
183 relative distance, high speed running distance, and high speed running percentage was noted in the  
184 first draft round (Table III).

185 **\*\*\*\*INSERT FIGURE I ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\***

186 **\*\*\*\*INSERT TABLE II ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\***

187 **\*\*\*\*INSERT TABLE III ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\***

188 Ten of the 64 models fit to the performance metric data by round estimated significant ( $P <$   
189 0.05) positive or negative slopes that were greater than zero (Figure II). Seven of the slope estimates  
190 were positive and three were negative. Nine of the ten significant slope estimates were from draft  
191 rounds one ( $n = 4$ ) and two ( $n = 5$ ). Within draft round one, relative distance, high speed running  
192 distance, and high speed running percentage were positively correlated with draft position, and the  
193 number of contested possessions was negatively correlated with draft position. Within draft round



194 two, the **weak** positive correlations of relative distance ( $\beta$  (SE) = 0.076 (0.035); 95% CI = 0.007 –  
195 0.145), high speed running distance ( $\beta$  (SE) = 0.060 (0.025); 95% CI = 0.011 – 0.109), and high speed  
196 running percentage ( $\beta$  (SE) = 0.077 (0.030); 95% CI = 0.018 – 0.136) remained, while the number of  
197 contested marks was negatively correlated with draft position ( $\beta$  (SE) = -0.069 (0.020); 95% CI = -  
198 0.109 – -0.030). Within draft round three, absolute distance was the only significant correlation; being  
199 negatively correlated with draft position ( $\beta$  (SE) = -0.085 (0.027); 95% CI = -0.139 – -0.033).

200 **\*\*\*\*INSERT FIGURE I ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\***

## 201 **Discussion**

202 This study investigated the extent to which position in the AFL **national draft** was associated with an  
203 U18 player’s physical and/or technical skill match activity profile. It was hypothesised that superior  
204 match activity profiles would correlate with lower draft position given the immediate and long-term  
205 success such players would be expected to provide an AFL team. Results indicated that none of the  
206 physical or technical performance metrics were predictive of draft round (one to four). However,  
207 within the first draft round, three physical metrics demonstrated a **weak** positive correlation with draft  
208 position, and one technical metric demonstrated a **weak** negative correlation with draft position.  
209 Specifically, relative distance, high speed running distance, and high speed running percentage were  
210 all positively correlated with the position a player was drafted in the first round, whilst contested  
211 possessions was negatively correlated with draft position in this round. **This indicates that players**  
212 **drafted earlier in the first round have a greater capability of accruing contested possessions, while**  
213 **players drafted later in this round exhibit relatively superior running qualities during game-play.**  
214 **These physical observations remained relatively constant for draft position in the second round,**  
215 **however in this instance, contested marks was negatively correlated with draft position rather than**  
216 **contested possessions.** This indicates that AFL recruiters favour a player’s capacity to record  
217 contested marks more so in the second round in comparison to other technical skill and physical  
218 performance metrics. **Although speculative, it is possible that a player’s field position influenced this**  
219 **observation. Thus, future research may wish to investigate the influence of playing position on draft**  
220 **success and position.** Nonetheless, this study presents insightful data that details the complex

221 interaction between a player's game-based performance in the national U18 championships and their  
222 subsequent draft position in the AFL.

223           When the results of this study are coupled with the findings of Woods et al. (2015) it can be  
224 concluded that contested elements of AF game-play (namely contested possessions and contested  
225 marks) are considerably influential for determining both an U18 players draft outcome (e.g. drafted or  
226 non-drafted), and draft position (selection in the first or second round; early or late). It could be  
227 postulated that juniors who can obtain or retain ball possession in temporally and/or spatially  
228 constrained contexts would be of value to AFL teams given the invasive and collisional nature of  
229 game-play (Gray & Jenkins, 2010); particularly within the AFL (Burgess et al., 2012). This  
230 observation has considerable implications for the training of prospective juniors. Specifically, junior  
231 coaches aiming to improve the likelihood of their players being drafted into the AFL should  
232 implement training drills that promote a high level of contested game-play; such as small-sided games  
233 (Farrow, Pyne, & Gabbett, 2008). Such drills may facilitate the development of contested skill, and in  
234 doing so, improve the likelihood of an optimistic draft outcome.

235           Of note were the significant positive correlations for the physical performance metrics and  
236 draft position in both the first and second round. This indicates that players drafted later in these  
237 rounds were likely to be more proficient runners during game-play than those drafted earlier within  
238 the same round. Consequently, AFL recruiters appear to change the 'type' of player they draft as the  
239 talent selection pool is reduced each round. This indicates that the more successful teams who possess  
240 the later draft picks may have players currently on their roster who already possess effective contested  
241 skills, and thus do not actively seek to draft such juniors as vigorously as the lower performing teams  
242 with the earlier draft picks. Conversely, AFL teams may look to draft more technically skilled players  
243 earlier in the draft sequence; reducing the number of players with such skills as the draft sequence  
244 increases.

245           Traditionally, AFL clubs will draft the best available player with their first pick, the next best  
246 available with their second pick, and so on. Given this process facilitates the continual size reduction

247 of the potential talent selection pool; some AFL recruiters may decide to strategically use their later  
248 picks to draft slightly ambiguous players. More directly, clubs may seek to draft juniors in later  
249 rounds who possess one or two considerably impressive performance qualities, but perhaps lack  
250 performance capabilities in other ‘traditional’ indicators. This is partially supported by our results,  
251 given the inability of the physical and technical skill performance metrics to meaningfully associate  
252 with draft position in rounds three and four. Consequently, it would be of value for future research to  
253 progress the analyses described here by including additional metrics, such as tactical performance.  
254 The inclusion of such may improve the depth of understanding with regards to the association  
255 between talent selection and individual game performance; providing a more comprehensive insight  
256 into the qualities that may/may not assist with a juniors AFL draft prospects.

## 257 **Conclusion**

258 Contested possessions and contested marks are the two performance metrics most associated with an  
259 earlier draft position in rounds one and two, respectively. Physical performance metrics appear to be  
260 more associated with a later draft position in these rounds; suggesting that as the talent selection pool  
261 grows smaller, AFL recruiters change the type of player they select within the national draft. The  
262 association between these performance metrics and draft position seems to weaken in draft round  
263 three and four; indicating that AFL clubs select players later in the national draft using performance  
264 indicators that were not investigated here. It is important to note that this study was only conducted on  
265 one draft cohort (the 2014 draft), and as such, future research should look to analyse multiple cohorts.  
266 This may account for factors such as playing position and/or environmental conditions, which may  
267 influence the physical and/or technical skill involvements players’ generate during game-play.  
268 Nonetheless, the current study provides a strong basis to guide both talent selection strategies in the  
269 AFL, and interventions aimed at improving a juniors AFL draft prospects. Additionally, the statistical  
270 analyses conducted in this study may be of use for other sports where a drafting system is used.

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322 **Table I.** The technical skill performance metrics and corresponding description used within this study

| <b>Technical performance metrics</b> | <b>Description</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Kick                                 | Disposing of the ball with any part of the leg below the knee including kicks off the ground   |
| Handball                             | Disposing of the ball by striking it with a fist while it rests on the opposing hand   |
| Disposals                            | Summation of kicks and handballs   |
| Effective disposals                  | Disposals resulting in a positive outcome for the team in possession (i.e. correctly passed to a teammate)   |
| Contested possessions                | Possessions obtained while in congested, and physically pressured situations (i.e. obtaining possessions of the ball while in dispute)                                   |
| Uncontested possessions              | Possessions obtained while a player is under no immediate physical pressure from the opposition  |
| Mark                                 | When a player cleanly catches (deemed by the umpire) a kicked ball that has travelled more than 15 metres without anyone else touching it or the ball hitting the ground |
| Contested mark                       | A mark recorded while engaging in a congested, physically pressured situation  |
| Uncontested mark                     | A mark recorded while under no physical pressure   |
| Inside 50                            | An action of moving the ball from the midfield into the forward 50 m zone  |
| Tackle                               | Using physical contact to prevent an opposition in possession of the ball from getting an effective disposal   |
| Clearance                            | Disposing of the ball from a congested stoppage in play  |

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326 **Table II.** Descriptive statistics (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation) for each physical and technical skill  
 327 performance metric according to draft round (one to four)

| <b>Performance metric</b>                | <b>Round one</b>    | <b>Round two</b>    | <b>Round three</b>   | <b>Round four</b>   |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Total distance (m)                       | 9639.5 $\pm$ 1437.0 | 9909.1 $\pm$ 1778.7 | 10138.7 $\pm$ 1866.2 | 9785.1 $\pm$ 1608.8 |
| Relative distance (m.min <sup>-1</sup> ) | 121.5 $\pm$ 13.5    | 121.8 $\pm$ 17.6    | 135.3 $\pm$ 14.2     | 119.6 $\pm$ 16.6    |
| High speed (%)                           | 25.9 $\pm$ 4.3      | 27.5 $\pm$ 5.4      | 31.2 $\pm$ 6.2       | 27.8 $\pm$ 6.1      |
| High speed (m >15km.hr <sup>-1</sup> )   | 2521.9 $\pm$ 668.2  | 2741.2 $\pm$ 748.2  | 3204.7 $\pm$ 961.3   | 2736.8 $\pm$ 6.1    |
| Kicks                                    | 9.5 $\pm$ 4.3       | 8.6 $\pm$ 3.9       | 8.0 $\pm$ 3.9        | 7.5 $\pm$ 3.5       |
| Handballs                                | 5.8 $\pm$ 3.3       | 6.2 $\pm$ 3.4       | 5.2 $\pm$ 2.9        | 5.0 $\pm$ 1.9       |
| Disposals                                | 15.4 $\pm$ 6.2      | 14.8 $\pm$ 5.5      | 13.3 $\pm$ 5.4       | 12.5 $\pm$ 4.7      |
| Effective disposals                      | 10.9 $\pm$ 4.7      | 10.7 $\pm$ 4.6      | 9.3 $\pm$ 4.6        | 8.8 $\pm$ 3.5       |
| Contested possessions                    | 6.6 $\pm$ 2.9       | 5.9 $\pm$ 3.1       | 5.4 $\pm$ 2.5        | 5.2 $\pm$ 2.1       |
| Uncontested possessions                  | 8.7 $\pm$ 5.2       | 8.8 $\pm$ 3.8       | 7.8 $\pm$ 4.1        | 7.5 $\pm$ 3.8       |
| Marks                                    | 3.7 $\pm$ 2.1       | 3.0 $\pm$ 2.2       | 2.9 $\pm$ 1.8        | 3.2 $\pm$ 2.2       |
| Contested marks                          | 0.6 $\pm$ 0.9       | 0.4 $\pm$ 0.6       | 0.1 $\pm$ 0.4        | 0.3 $\pm$ 0.5       |
| Uncontested marks                        | 3.3 $\pm$ 2.0       | 2.6 $\pm$ 2.0       | 2.7 $\pm$ 1.7        | 2.8 $\pm$ 2.2       |
| Tackles                                  | 2.6 $\pm$ 1.8       | 2.5 $\pm$ 2.0       | 3.8 $\pm$ 2.5        | 3.0 $\pm$ 2.4       |
| Clearances                               | 1.7 $\pm$ 1.8       | 1.7 $\pm$ 2.1       | 1.6 $\pm$ 1.7        | 1.0 $\pm$ 1.4       |
| Inside 50 m                              | 3.1 $\pm$ 1.8       | 1.9 $\pm$ 1.5       | 2.3 $\pm$ 1.7        | 1.8 $\pm$ 1.6       |

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336 **Table III.** Model parameter estimates of the linear mixed effects models fitted to the first round draft  
 337 position data

| <b>Performance metric</b>                 | <b>Estimate</b> | <b>SE</b> | <b>LCI</b> | <b>UCI</b> |
|---|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Total distance (m)                        | 0.020           | 0.018     | -0.016     | 0.056      |
| Relative distance (m.min <sup>-1</sup> )* | 0.059           | 0.026     | 0.007      | 0.113      |
| High speed (%)*                           | 0.054           | 0.022     | 0.012      | 0.097      |
| High speed (m >15km.hr <sup>-1</sup> )*   | 0.041           | 0.019     | 0.004      | 0.080      |
| Kicks                                     | -0.011          | 0.034     | -0.077     | 0.056      |
| Handballs                                 | 0.005           | 0.030     | -0.053     | 0.065      |
| Disposals                                 | <0.001          | 0.037     | -0.072     | 0.075      |
| Effective disposals                       | 0.008           | 0.034     | -0.057     | 0.076      |
| Contested possessions*                    | -0.061          | 0.021     | -0.102     | -0.017     |
| Uncontested possessions                   | 0.036           | 0.039     | -0.039     | 0.115      |
| Marks                                     | 0.002           | 0.021     | -0.040     | 0.044      |
| Contested marks                           | -0.027          | 0.033     | -0.094     | 0.038      |
| Uncontested marks                         | 0.013           | 0.022     | -0.030     | 0.057      |
| Tackles                                   | 0.010           | 0.023     | -0.035     | 0.057      |
| Clearances                                | -0.029          | 0.034     | -0.095     | 0.039      |
| Inside 50 m                               | -0.027          | 0.026     | -0.078     | 0.025      |

338 *Note:* Estimate, beta coefficient estimate; SE, standard error of the coefficient; LCI, lower 95%  
 339 confidence interval of the Estimate; UCI, Upper 95% confidence interval of the Estimate; \* denotes  
 340 significance ( $P < 0.05$ ).

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346 **Figure I.** The centred and scaled data used for the ordinal regression models demonstrating that none  
347 of the physical and technical skill performance metrics are discriminative of draft round.

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366 **Figure II.** The linear model lattice fitted by round and performance metric

367 *Note:* The interpretation of this Figure is as follows: Filled circles are positive correlations; the empty  
368 circles are negative correlations; black circles represent ‘non-significant’ ( $P > 0.05$ ) effects; orange  
369 circles represent ‘significant’ ( $P < 0.05$ ) effects.

370 uncont., uncontested; cont., contested; eff., efficiency; HS, high speed