

Key Factors that Influence the Value of Football Players

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Abstract: This article delves into the multifaceted factors that shape the value of football players, aiming to offer a comprehensive reference for those involved in the football industry. It examines five key aspects: technical ability, match experience, physical fitness, mental strength, and market value. Technical proficiency and ball sense are highlighted as core elements, with top players like Messi and Ronaldo exemplifying their significance. Position-specific skills and adaptability are also crucial, as evidenced by players like Andres Iniesta. Physical qualities such as speed, agility, physical resistance, and endurance are analyzed through standardized tests and statistics, emphasizing their impact on performance. Psychological qualities like mental toughness, leadership, and teamwork are explored, with examples from renowned figures like Johan Cruyff and Lionel Messi. The article also discusses the commercial side, including brand value, social media influence, and the dynamics of the transfer market, using cases like Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappe. Ultimately, it reveals the complex interplay of these factors in determining a player's overall value.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the training and development of football players, Cui and Rong explored innovative strategies for the intelligent development of physical training in football, aiming to enhance training effectiveness and efficiency (Cui and Rong, 2024). Qin studied practical approaches to cultivating high-level football athletes in universities in the new era, providing theoretical guidance and practical directions for university football talent cultivation (Qin, 2024).

Shao rationally examined the development of professional football in China from the perspective of resource conservation theory, offering new angles for the healthy development of professional football (Shao, 2024). Pei et al. investigated the impact of key psychological factors on football performance, highlighting the significant role of psychological factors in athlete performance (Pei et al., 2024). In terms of teaching and training methods in football, Zhao researched the application of competition methods in football teaching and training, which helps enrich teaching and training methods (Zhao, 2020). Regarding the cultivation of young football talents, You et al. discussed implementation paths for the long-term development of young football talents in China in the new era, which is crucial for sustainable talent cultivation (You et al., 2021). In

financial research related to football players, Zhang conducted an analysis of the recognition and measurement of accounting assets for football players, providing references for evaluating their commercial value (Zhang, 2023).

There have been numerous achievements in football-related research abroad. In studies on the relationship between football players' physical condition and athletic performance, Munera et al. conducted a cross-sectional study on the relationship between pre-season anthropometric characteristics, body composition, and physical performance of Spanish professional women's football players (Munera et al., 2025). Regarding the relationship between training load and movement parameters in football players, Pinelli et al. explored the relationship between acute and chronic workload ratios and running parameters in elite football players (Pinelli et al., 2025). In the field of evaluating the commercial value of football players, Liu studied the depreciation differences in valuations of football players during their golden and prime periods in the Premier League and top European leagues, providing a cross-league comparative analysis for financial valuation of football players (Liu, 2025).

2 TECHNICAL ABILITIES

2.1 Technical Proficiency and Ball Sense

In the sport of football, technical proficiency and ball sense are among the core elements that measure an athlete's value. Technical proficiency is reflected in an athlete's ability to control the ball, the accuracy of their passes, shooting techniques, and dribbling skills. For example, according to statistics from Federation International de Football Association (FIFA), forwards in top leagues attempt about three shots per game on average, and players with higher than the average shot conversion rates often bring more victories to their teams. Ball sense, however, is a hard-to-quantify intuition that allows players to accurately judge the ball's landing point and trajectory even at high speeds, enabling them to react quickly and accurately. Developing ball sense typically requires extensive training and match experience, as the football legend Pele once said: "Football is a simple game, but playing it well is difficult." Top players like Messi and Ronaldo have technical proficiency and ball sense that are key to their career success and an important part of their market value.

2.2 Location-Specific Skills and Adaptability

In the sport of football, positional-specific skills and adaptability are key factors in determining an athlete's value. For example, a midfielder needs to excel in passing, ball control, and vision, while a forward must have efficient shooting and scoring abilities. According to statistics from FIFA, players who can play multiple positions are often favored by clubs because their versatility provides coaches with more tactical options. For instance, Andres Iniesta of the Spanish national team not only demonstrated exceptional creativity in midfield but also played as an attacker at critical moments.

In terms of analytical models, this paper can refer to the renowned "Position Adaptive Model," which predicts a player's potential for adaptation in new positions by evaluating their performance data across different roles. As football legend Johan Cruyff once said, "Football is a game of space; players who understand and utilize it will have immense value." Therefore, position-specific skills and adaptability not only reflect a player's technical versatility but are also a crucial component of their market value.

3 PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL QUALITY

3.1 Page Setup Physical Fitness of Athletes

3.1.1 Speed and Agility

In modern football, speed and agility are key indicators of an athlete's technical ability. Speed is not only reflected in straight sprints but also in the player's acceleration, change of direction, and short-distance sprinting capabilities during matches. For example, according to Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) statistics, a top footballer can achieve an acceleration time of 3.6 seconds within 10 meters, while the sprint time for 50 meters is typically around 6 seconds. These figures indicate that speed is crucial for athletes' performance in games, especially in counterattacks and fast breaks, where a speed advantage often translates directly into scoring opportunities.

Agility involves an athlete's ability to perform quick and precise movements within limited space, which is particularly crucial in modern football matches characterized by tight defense and rapid transitions between attack and defense. Athletes with high agility can make multiple swift directional changes in a short time, effectively breaking free from opponents' defenses and creating offensive opportunities. Take Messi as an example; Messi is renowned worldwide for the exceptional agility and dribbling skills, enabling people to execute quick feints and directional shifts in confined spaces, thereby overcoming the opponent's defensive line.

In terms of analyzing models, the assessment of speed and agility can be conducted through a series of standardized tests, such as the 30-meter sprint test and agility tests (like the T-test). These tests provide quantifiable data to coaching teams, helping them evaluate athletes' physical condition and actual performance in competitions. Moreover, speed and agility are closely related to an athlete's muscle strength, explosive power, and coordination. Therefore, training programs should include targeted physical training and skill exercises to enhance these aspects of performance.

In conclusion, speed and agility are crucial components of a football player's technical abilities; they directly impact the athlete's performance and value in matches. Through scientific training and evaluation, athletes' speed and agility can be

effectively improved, thereby enhancing their competitiveness and market value in games.

3.1.2 Physical Resistance and Endurance

In the high-intensity sport of football, physical combat ability and endurance are crucial components of an athlete's value. Physical combat ability not only manifests as hard power in one-on-one defense and offense but also determines whether a player can maintain possession during tight marking and break through the opponent's defense in fast counterattacks. For instance, according to FIFA statistics, top center-backs average about 20 physical confrontations per game, while forwards must maintain speed and direction control during these confrontations to ensure accurate shots. In terms of endurance, modern football matches typically last over 60 minutes on average, which demands that athletes have excellent physical reserves and recovery capabilities. Endurance training models, such as the Yo-Yo interval recovery test, are widely used to assess an athlete's fitness level. Endurance not only affects performance in matches but is also closely related to injury prevention and career longevity. As football legend Johan Cruyff once pointed out that "Football is a game of space and time, and endurance is the key to mastering time".

3.2 Athletes' Psychological Quality

3.2.1 Psychological Resilience in Competition

In the high-intensity, fast-paced sport of football, an athlete's mental toughness is one of the key factors determining their value. Mental toughness, also known as psychological resilience, refers to an individual's ability to maintain a positive attitude and recover quickly when facing pressure, adversity, or challenges. In football matches, this ability is particularly crucial because the outcome often hinges on the players' mental state at critical moments. For example, a study of top European league players showed that those who remain calm under pressure and make correct decisions tend to bring more victories to their teams.

Mental toughness is not only reflected at the individual level but also in teamwork. A player with high mental toughness can motivate teammates when they are behind, maintaining team morale and turning the tide of the game. As legendary football coach Johan Cruyff said, "Football is a simple game made up of complex parts." Mental toughness is an indispensable part of these complex elements.

3.2.2 Leadership and Team Spirit

In the team sport of football, leadership and teamwork are key factors determining a team's success. Leadership is not only reflected in on-field command and decision-making but also in motivating teammates and boosting team morale. For example, football superstar Lionel Messi is renowned not only for the exceptional individual skills but also for the leadership on the field. The people can inspire the teammates' potential and enhance team cohesion through the performance and attitude. Research shows that players with strong leadership often lead their teams to victory at critical moments, such as when German captain Philipp Lahm's leadership played a decisive role in Germany's final win at the 2014 World Cup.

Teamwork requires players to trust and coordinate with each other on the field, forming a cohesive unit. In modern football tactics, the coordination and passing accuracy among players are key indicators of teamwork. For example, Barcelona's "Tiki-Taka" strategy relies on unparalleled chemistry and rapid short passes between players. The successful implementation of this tactic not only demands exceptional skills from the players but also a high level of teamwork. As the famous football coach Johan Cruyff said, "Football is not a game for one man, but eleven men." This statement underscores the importance of teamwork in football matches.

In addition, the cultivation of leadership and teamwork is closely related to players' personalities, growth backgrounds, and coaching guidance. In terms of analytical models, the Belbin Team Role Theory provides a framework to help understand the roles and contributions of different players within a team. According to this theory, a successful team requires players with various roles, including plant-type innovators, resource investigators, coordinators, shapers, supervisors and evaluators, team workers, executors, completers, and experts. Each player can demonstrate their unique leadership and teamwork in the team, collectively driving the team toward its goals.

4 MARKET VALUE OF ATHLETES

4.1 Brand Value and Business Potential

In the modern football industry, an athlete's brand value and commercial potential have become one of the key factors influencing their market value. Brand

value is not only reflected in a player's technical skills, match experience, physical fitness, and mental strength but also closely tied to their personal image, market recognition, and interactions with sponsors and fans. For example, football legends Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, whose brand value far exceeds their on-field performance, extends into areas such as advertising, social media, and business collaborations. According to data released by Forbes, a significant portion of Ronaldo's annual income in 2021 came from sponsorships and commercial activities, which fully demonstrates the commercial potential of top players.

Analytical models such as the "Brand Equity Valuation" (BAV) can be used to measure and analyze an athlete's brand value. This model takes into account multiple dimensions including brand awareness, brand differentiation, brand relevance, and brand loyalty. Taking football players as an example, their outstanding performances in international tournaments can enhance personal brand recognition and differentiation, thereby increasing their commercial value. For instance, Kylian Mbappe of France, with this remarkable performance at the 2018 World Cup, not only won the "Golden Boy Award" but also significantly boosted this brand value and commercial potential, attracting numerous brands seeking collaboration.

In addition, an athlete's commercial potential is closely tied to their influence on social media. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook provide athletes with a space to interact with fans and shape their personal image. By sharing training, matches, and daily life on these platforms, athletes can increase fan engagement and loyalty, thereby enhancing their commercial value. For example, Paul Pogba's active presence on social media not only strengthened this connection with fans but also brought people more business collaboration opportunities.

In summary, the brand value and commercial potential of football players are the result of multiple factors working together. From technical skills to match experience, from physical fitness to mental strength, and then to age and injury history, these factors collectively form an athlete's personal brand and influence their value in the transfer market. The interaction between international influence and market value further enhances the commercial potential of athletes. Therefore, evaluating and enhancing the brand value and commercial potential of athletes is crucial for clubs, sponsors, and the athletes themselves.

4.2 Demand and Supply in Transfer Market

In the football player transfer market, the dynamic relationship between demand and supply is one of the key factors determining a player's value. According to FIFA reports, the global football transfer market has been growing steadily in recent years, with total transfer fees reaching \$7 billion in 2019. This growth reflects the rising market value of top players and also highlights the intense competition among clubs for scarce talent. For example, Paris Saint-Germain signed Neymar in 2017 for a record-breaking fee of 222 million, which not only demonstrated Neymar's comprehensive technical skills, match experience, and market value but also reflected the high demand for top-tier players in the transfer market.

On the supply side, factors such as a player's age, injury history, and international influence all impact their market value. Young players are generally seen as more promising, making them more popular in the transfer market. For example, 18-year-old French forward Kylian Mbappe transferred to Paris Saint-Germain for €180 million in 2017. The youth and talent made the club willing to pay a high transfer fee. In contrast, an injury history can reduce a player's market value, as long-term injuries can decrease playing time, affect performance and adaptability, thereby impacting the club's willingness to purchase.

The relationship between demand and supply in the transfer market can be analyzed using the supply and demand model from economics. When there is an increase in demand for a specific skill or position, if the supply remains unchanged or increases slowly, the market value of these players will rise. Conversely, if there is an oversupply of a certain type of player, even if they possess high technical skills, their market value may decline. Therefore, the market value of a player is the result of their individual abilities, market conditions, and club strategic decisions working together.

5 CONCLUSION

The value of a football player is a complex construct influenced by a myriad of interrelated factors. Technical ability stands out as a fundamental pillar, with proficiency in ball control, passing accuracy, shooting techniques, and dribbling skills being essential. Ball sense, an intuitive ability to judge the ball's trajectory, further enhances a player's technical prowess. Position-specific skills and adaptability are

equally important, as players who can excel in multiple roles offer greater tactical flexibility to their teams. Physical fitness, encompassing speed, agility, resistance, and endurance, is vital for modern football, where high-intensity actions and long matches are the norm. Psychological qualities such as mental toughness, leadership, and teamwork are often the intangible factors that can make or break a player's performance, especially in high-pressure situations. The commercial aspect of a player's value cannot be overlooked. Brand value and social media influence have become significant, with top players leveraging these platforms to enhance their marketability. The dynamics of the transfer market, driven by supply and demand, also play a crucial role in determining a player's monetary worth. Young, talented players with minimal injury history and high international influence are highly sought after, while those with recurring injuries may see their value diminish. In conclusion, a football player's value is the culmination of their technical, physical, psychological attributes, and commercial potential, all of which interact in intricate ways to shape their standing in the football world. This comprehensive analysis underscores the need for a holistic approach in evaluating and nurturing football talents, ensuring that all these aspects are considered to maximize a player's potential and market value.

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