

# A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN FITNESS AND SKILL COMPONENTS

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**Abstract:** This paper provides a self-analysis of my performance as a full-back in football, focusing on two key strengths and two weaknesses in fitness and skill components. The strengths identified are agility and heading, while the weaknesses are speed and tackling. Each component is defined, contextualized within the role of a full-back, and illustrated with real-match examples. The analysis demonstrates how these attributes influence individual and team performance, highlighting areas for future improvement and current advantages.

**Keywords:** Football performance; Full-back analysis; Fitness components; Skill components; Self-analysis

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of football, the role of the full-back has evolved dramatically from a purely defensive position to a multifaceted one that demands a complex synthesis of physical prowess and technical mastery. Modern full-backs are expected to contribute decisively in both defensive and offensive phases, acting as key catalysts for their team's tactical success[1]. This report presents a critical self-analysis of my personal performance within this demanding role, structured around an examination of two distinct strengths and two weaknesses. Specifically, the fitness component of agility and the technical skill of heading are identified as key strengths, while the fitness component of speed and the technical skill of tackling are recognized as significant weaknesses. Each component is rigorously evaluated through a retrospective analysis of specific match scenarios encountered while playing for Gulf United during the 2024 season[2]. The primary aim of this analysis is not only to elucidate the direct impact of these attributes on individual and team performance but also to establish a clear and actionable foundation for my future athletic development. By systematically reflecting on these elements, this report seeks to identify pathways for targeted improvement, with the ultimate goal of achieving a more balanced and impactful presence on the pitch[3].

## 2 FITNESS COMPONENT

### 2.1 Strength One: Agility

One fitness component that is a strength for me is agility. This is defined as the ability to move and change direction quickly at speed whilst maintaining control. Agility is important to my position as a full back in football because I need to be agile to be able to successfully respond to an attacker's movement so I can be in position to make a tackle or block a shot on defence[4]. I also need it to dribble past opposing players if I participate in offence. One example of when I demonstrated this strength was when I had a match for my club who are Gulf United against United FA on May 28th. I was up against the opposing team's left winger when I was right back for my team. The opposing left winger at one point had the ball and was running with it directly at me in a one-on-one on the wing. He made a few stepovers before suddenly cutting inside and attempting a shot with his right foot[5]. However, given my strong agility, I was able to quickly change direction from jockeying backwards with my body facing outwards (I did this in order to persuade him to go outwards with the ball, the side I was showing him, where I could easily make my tackle) to having my body face inwards so I could follow him. Therefore, I managed to react accordingly and quick enough to follow him inside and block the shot with my outstretched left foot. The other team was on the counterattack and hence there weren't surrounding teammates to help me. With the shot being attempted inside the penalty box, it was imperative that I stopped the shot as it could've been a potential goal for the other team. Instead, thanks to my good agility, the ball was blocked and the ball rebounded to one of my teammates. Hence, my team regained possession, and we carried on with our attack. Another example of when I demonstrated this strength was during a game against GO PRO DESC with Gulf United on May the 10<sup>th</sup>. I made a run on the wing on that same right side, overlapping my right winger who had cut inwards with the ball[6]. He passed me the ball, and I took it outside with two strides before cutting inwards with the ball. Due to my good agility, I was able to change my direction with the ball quickly whilst having the balance to stay on my feet. Hence, I managed to not only get the separation from my marker, whose momentum in the outwards direction was too great for his agility to overcome and hence couldn't follow me, but also have the balance to make a cross with my left foot into the penalty box which was guided in by our striker with a header into the net. Thanks to my good agility, I managed to make a successful cross that couldn't have been blocked (because my marker wasn't in position to) and it led to my team scoring a goal which put ourselves ahead that game[7]. However, without good agility,

I could've been tackled with the opposing team regaining possession and launching a potential counterattack. Therefore, agility enhanced my overall performance because I can exploit it to outwit opponents in both defensive and attacking situations, allowing me to prevent goal-scoring opportunities of the other team and create them for my team as seen above (which is the aim of the sport). Hence it gives my team a better chance to win each game and making me more valuable as a full back to my team[8-9].

## **2.2 Weakness One: Fitness Component**

One fitness component that is a weakness for me is speed. This is defined as the maximum rate at which an individual is able to perform a movement or cover a distance in a period of time.

This is important to me as a full back in football because I need to have it to chase opposing wingers with the ball so I am in the right position to make a tackle or block a shot/cross. I also need speed to follow opposing wingers when they don't have the ball to be in the position to stop them being free to receive the ball. One example of when this weakness negatively impacted my performance was in another game playing for Gulf United against Dynamo on April the 19<sup>th</sup> when the opposing team were on the counterattack. I found myself in a situation where the opposition had a 3 versus 2 advantage. The opposition, having just crossed a few yards into our half, were running at us with a player at each flank and a person in the middle with the ball. Meanwhile, another player and I were jockeying backwards side by side in the centre of them. The person in the middle passed a through ball between us to their left winger who I, as right back for that game, was marking. Their left winger sprinted onto the ball and managed to take it inside the penalty box, scoring in his one-on-one with the goalkeeper. This was because I didn't have enough speed to keep up with him, meaning I wasn't in the position to tackle him when he was sprinting with the ball or in the position to block the shot. Had I been faster, I would've been in those positions, and the opposition subsequently wouldn't have scored. Another occasion where this weakness negatively impacted my performance was on April the 5<sup>th</sup> against Brazilian Talent when I was playing for Gulf United. The opposing left winger had the ball on the wing and was dribbling with it straight at me (the right back for my team). I was jockeying and purposefully left a few yards of space between us. This was because I knew that he was faster than me so I would be in a better position if he used his speed as the distance for me to cover behind me would be less. However, when he pushed it past me on the outside with his right foot, he managed to dribble it to the by-line before crossing the ball with his left foot. This resulted in it being headed in by their striker and hence a goal for the opposition. This had happened because of my inferior speed which meant that I couldn't keep up with his movements and hence wasn't in the right position to either make a tackle and dispose the ball off him when he was dribbling it past me or be in the correct position to block the cross at the by-line. Therefore, the other team had scored because of speed being one of my biggest weaknesses in terms of components of fitness instead of the ball safely away from danger by going out the side line or us regaining possession. Speed being my weakness has negatively impacted my overall performance because I am often unable to follow my opponent's movement with them often taking less time to do the same movement or cover the same distance than me. Hence, I'm unable to be in the right position to react and defend successfully.

## **3 SKILL/TACTICAL COMPONENTS**

### **3.1 Strength Two: Heading**

One skill that I have identified as a strength for me is heading. Heading is the skill where you use your forehead to accurately guide the ball to where you want. It could be used to either be making clearances, passes, or shots on goal.

This is important to me as a full back when playing football because the ball could sometimes be in the air. Hence, a player is required to be good at heading to be able to win the ball- by first holding their ground so an opposing player won't be able to win the header, then timing their jump whilst positioning their body, and finally making clean contact with the ball using their forehead- so their team could keep possession. I need to be able to head the ball in an attacking manner. For example, as a full-back for my team and being tall, I am required to go up into the opposing team's penalty box to try to score when it's our corner and the ball would often be in the air so it's most optimal for me to head it down into the goal. However, I also equally need to be able to head the ball in a defensive manner: when it's the opposition's corner and the ball would also be in the air from a cross, I would need to be able to make a clearance by heading the ball away from the box and hence get away the danger of opposition scoring. Therefore, heading is important to me as a full back in football.

An example of when I displayed heading as my strength was my Sunday League match on March 29<sup>th</sup> against Juve (Black) when I was still playing for Gulf United. My team had won a corner, and my teammate was going to take a corner with his right foot from the right-hand side of the pitch. We had me and 4 other people in the box, each being man-marked by one of the opposition. The opposing team also had another man at the first post and one at the back post. As my teammate stepped up to the ball and crossed the ball in, I, from standing approximately 5 to 7 metres away from the back post, managed to run diagonally in the direction of the front post before suddenly and sharply cutting back to the back post and lose my marker in the mess of bodies around the 5-yard line. The ball had managed to pass that mess to the back post where I could meet it with a perfectly timed run. I had saw it coming, jumped up without much difficulty (as I was unguarded), angled my head downwards and guided the ball down to the bottom left corner. As the skill heading was one of my strengths, I was able to guide the ball to where I wanted it to at enough speed. Hence, I had scored a goal and make the score level. If my heading wasn't as proficient, I could've missed the ball entirely, head the

ball over the crossbar or it could've been saved by the goalkeeper with the possibility that they would regain possession, and we would still be trailing by a goal. Another example of when I displayed heading as my strength was another Sunday League match against 971 Academy on March 22<sup>nd</sup> when I was playing for my Sunday League team Gulf United. My team had won another corner, and my right winger was going to take a corner with his right foot from the left-hand side of the pitch. We were running a set play: me and two other centre backs were standing next to each other in the middle of the edge of the penalty box whilst our markers were waiting in front of us with each focused on one of us. The opposing team again also had someone at the first post and one at the back post. As my right winger stepped up to the ball and crossed the ball in, me and two of our centre backs ran in our specific directions with me running straight to the back post. I managed to get unguarded given that our specific runs had blocked our markers' paths to follow us. The ball had managed to reach me at the second post but I didn't need to jump as the cross was perfectly at my head level. I saw my striker being free at the other post as the ball came so I headed the ball across goal to him where he managed to head it in with my pass being at the level of his head. Because of heading being one of my strengths, I managed to have my position my body correctly and used my forehead to guide my pass, so it could be at the right speed for it to be an assist. Hence, we managed to lead by one goal. If my heading was one of my weaknesses, my pass would otherwise have been intercepted by the goalkeeper if it wasn't at the right speed or it would've ended up in an uncomfortable position for my striker where he couldn't score. Therefore, we wouldn't have been leading by a goal, and they could've regained possession and potentially launched a counterattack.

Heading being one of my strengths has positively impacted my overall performance as a full-back because I am often able to make clearances with my head when the opposing side has a corner, making the ball go away from danger, or make contributions in offence when we have a corner as seen above. Therefore heading being one of my strengths has enhanced my abilities and made me achieve my defensive and offensive responsibilities better as a full back.

### 3.2 Weakness Two: Tackling

One skill that I have identified as a weakness for me is tackling. Tackling is the skill where you use your feet to dispossess your opponent without committing a foul.

This is important to me as a full back in football because I have defensive responsibilities where I am responsible to stop the opposition from scoring having being primarily a defender. This is greatly achieved with the skill tackling where it can help me dispossess wingers and this is successful as they can't score without the ball.

One example of when I displayed tackling as my weakness was on the match when I was playing for Gulf United against Eltie FA on February 9<sup>th</sup>. The opposition was on an attack and the ball had been passed to the left winger. He was dribbling it with his right foot at me who was right back and was jockeying with my body facing outwards. I decided to make a tackle and lunged forwards at him but it was mistimed by being a second slower. Consequently the winger managed to knock it past me on the outside before cutting inside and hence cutting me off the action as I can't tackle from behind without giving away a foul. The winger then made a cross with his right foot into our penalty box which had our other two defenders in our back three man-marking a striker each. However the ball still found the striker on the far side and landed in his stride who converted it in with a volley, having reached the ball before our centre back marking him. As tackling was one of my weaknesses, I didn't dispossess my man effectively, giving him the space and time to make a cross that managed to be converted in. Therefore, partly because of my unsuccessful tackle, the opposition managed to open the scoring instead of the ball going out of bounds and away from danger, or me regaining possession for my team and potentially launching a counterattack.

Another example of when I displayed tackling as my weakness was on the match against GO PRO A on May 31<sup>st</sup> when I was playing for Gulf United. The opposing team was on the counterattack and I, being a fullback that stayed back for a corner on a rare occasion, was in a 2v1 situation where I was jockeying backwards. I tried to be equidistant from the attacker dribbling with the ball with his right foot on the left-hand side and the other one on the right-hand side running at the same level. When I had backed up near the penalty box, the attacker with the ball decided to push it forwards into the box with his right foot which had initiated me to cease jockeying and instead run to the ball where I made a slide tackle. However, the attacker had managed to get to it first and knock the ball a bit further with his left foot in the time I made the tackle. As a result, my mistimed tackle meant that my feet connected with both his legs and brought him down instead of the ball as I was supposed to. Hence, I gave away a penalty to the opposing team which was calmly converted in by their penalty taker into the bottom left-hand corner with our goalkeeper guessing the wrong way. As tackling was my weakness, I managed to give away a penalty and hence a goal to the other team for them to level the scoring instead of making the ball go out the sideline or the goal line where their danger of scoring would be significantly less than from a penalty box.

Tackling being one of my weaknesses has negatively impacted my overall performance as a full-back because I am often unable to stop the opponents from scoring (my main responsibility as a defender) given that dispossessing them of the ball is one of the main methods. Therefore, heading being one of my strengths has decreased my defensive abilities less as a full back.

## 4 CONCLUSION

This analysis confirms that agility and heading are significant strengths that enhance my performance as a full-back, while speed and tackling are areas requiring improvement. The examples illustrate how these components directly

influence match outcomes. Future training should focus on developing speed through sprint drills and improving tackling technique under match conditions. By addressing these weaknesses while leveraging my strengths, I can become a more complete and effective player.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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