Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Human performance capacity, as a rule, is more than the sum of its components and the modern science is still not capable of satisfactorily recording and assessing it. As a result we do not have any concrete formula for the assessment of talent.¹

The desire to do one’s personal best to excel and to attain the highest standards of performance to be supreme in his chosen field is a worthy human ambition, which has led and can continue to lead to increased standards and personal growth. We want not only to live, but also to have some thing to live for and for some people this means to pursue excellence in sports. High level of achievements and excellence in any area do not come easily. Becoming a highly skilled person in any field – athletics, art, surgery, science, writing, teaching, demands commitments and sacrifice on the part of the person concerned. The

trial is hard and steep. There are numerous obstacles to overcome and barriers to push forth.

Recreation and competition in sports complement and supplement each other. Predominance of one over the other at a particular time is a matter of society’s attitude towards sports. Yesterday’s sports were more recreative. Today they are more competitive. Sports, sans competition, are viewed as a body without soul. There cannot be performance without competition. Competition motivates, stimulates and inspires the individuals and the teams to make and break records and “to run faster, jump higher and throw farther and strive to do better than before”; as Olympic Motto goes. Yet the Olympic ideals are today mostly followed in breach only because most nations in the world attempt to project the superiority of their respective political ideology and “socials orders” through the medium of their sports achievements.

Competition is one of the outgrowths of modern society. Every individual or a team, which participates in any sport/game, wants to win as our society attaches a great significance to “winning”.
According to Renwes "performance is key note of all sports – its basic Principle". Since the sports have become prestigious aspect to purse one’s superiority, the philosophy of participation in games and sports has undergone a great change.²

As with a number of other sports, tracing the origins of soccer is a daunting task. Soccer, which is called football in most countries, seems to be the forerunner of all ball games, including Basketball, Cricket, Croquet, Golf, Handball, Hockey, Tennis and Volleyball, and it may date back as far as ancient China. Around 1697 B.C., Emperor Huang-Ti devised a game called “tsu-chu”, based on military strategy, in which warriors kicked a leather ball stuffed with cork and hair between two bamboo posts.

The Romans developed team games like the one called “harpastum”, a violent mass contest involving teams of upto 500 players who fought over an animal bladder. “Harpastum” was meant as a training exercise for battle; and as the empire expanded, Roman

soldiers introduced it throughout the newly conquered lands, including England.

The English version evolved somewhat differently: each team would attempt to kick an object — originally a human skull but later an inflated animal bladder encased in leather to the center of the opposing team’s town. According to English legend, the skull of a captured Dane served as the first soccer ball.

Probably soccer, like many sports, was developed as a way of preparing for war; and in its early days, when there were few or no rules, games were quite similar to military battles. There were no constriction on the number of participants on a side or on the size of the playing field, and the game even involved bloodshed. In England, the Lord Mayor of London eventually attempted to forbid it (1314 A.D.).

As soccer evolved, it became less violent, crude and brutal; lost its function as a military exercise; and began to emerge as highly skilled strategic sport. The standardization of soccer rules in 1873 accelerated the movement toward the modern game.
In the 1990s, soccer was widely acknowledged to the world’s favourite game, both for players and spectators. Around the world, over 200 million people watch the game, more than 41 million teams play it and more than 20 million organized the games and these figures are projected to grow even larger.\(^3\)

Over the years the public has flocked football grounds to see personalities such as Methews, Di Stifano, Pele, Eusebio, Best, Charlton, Backenbauer, Cruyff and Maradona. They do not flock to see impersonal ball-passers.

But for a long time now soccer has produced few technically accomplished, creative players. The result is that the game has become colourless and dominated by mediocrity. Even at the very top level there are many players who are helpless when they are in possession of the ball; because they have not mastered attacking techniques and therefore cannot make openings. A reasonable standard of soccer is still being played in the top clubs. Of course, but this is because they spend

millions to get the best players and the best coaches. These clubs disguise the real situation. In very few countries the league championship is seriously in doubt. But the general public is often not aware of the true state of affairs; because only the best moments of the best games are shown on television. Even the top clubs, the ones that keep going by buying the best players, have great difficulty entertaining their fans.

This is strange, though every year thousands of youngsters join soccer clubs, where they are confronted with qualified trainers mass-produced in special courses. These trainers have excellent facilities and first-class material at their disposal. More and more mediocre players and passers manage to survive through effort, fitness and running ability and this does nothing to benefit the quality of the game. There is nothing wrong with a player keeping his position through work rate. Provided the game is enlivened by attractive individual play. When the workers begin to gain the upper hand, as now the future begins to look
back. The public wants to see more than handwork; they want the kind of brilliant individual play that gives rise to unforgettable memories.  

Soccer is a sport emphasized on speed, quickness, and coordination not brute strength. It can be enjoyed equally by boys and girls, men and women, the very tall and the very short, the stout and the thin.

A coach's aim is to find the most economical way of causing a player to become a better player in the widest possible sense. This improvement may relate to the player's understanding of the game or to the development of his technique. More likely it concerns players' capabilities must be interdependent.

Soccer is a game of ball control both individually and in combination with other members of the team. To be able to control a soccer ball, a player must master the fundamentals by using any part of his body, but his hands and arms should not be used.  

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At each position in the field there are specific offensive and
defensive responsibilities. The players, with specific responsibilities,
have to manoeuvre a definite planned and strategic offensive and
defensive pattern. Well-trained and skillful players adjust themselves
with the pace of the game and they move with the ball effectively at
every position and help their teammates in every department of the
game.

Individual offensive skills range from fundamental ball control,
trapping, dribbling and so on to kicking and heading for passing and
scoring. The skills of soccer developed by players are highly inter-
dependant. Good players can switch quickly from walking to sprinting
and from dribbling to passing and kicking, sometimes in a matter of
only a few milliseconds. Thus all the skills should complement one
another. Dribbling and trapping, for instance, are considered finesse or
‘touch’ skills; good players know how to integrate these finesse skills
with the power or striking skills – kicking and heading.\footnote{6 Zumervick, \textit{Encyclopedia of Sports Science}, PP. 446-447.}
The fundamental skills involved in soccer are kicking, passing, heading, feinting, throw-in, receiving, tackling etc. Playing ability in this game comprises effective use of these skills in the form of individual and team tactics.

Skill is a relative quality, not to be defined in absolute terms. Performance displayed by an individual may be so outstanding as to warrant his being considered skilled, by comparison with a group of his peers on the neighbourhood football field. The same person, when placed in contrast with some member of 'varsity team, may appear relatively unskilled. Skill, as demonstrated by performance, is an indication of that, which has been learned. Skill and performance can be greatly influenced by a host of factors that may have psychological or emotional origins. However, it is usually thought that the highly skilled individual will be able to perform fairly consistently regardless of the factors present that might cause the 'average' persons performance to fluctuate.⁷

In the past, skill has been closely associated with high levels of performance in the so-called basic techniques of the game such as heading, kicking, tackling, dribbling etc. It was held that the basic problem in teaching or coaching the game was establishing a level of competence in these techniques. In other words, the problem was approached by reducing or simplifying it into what were held to be its component parts. This, of course, was true of all sports coaching, indeed some sports still hold firmly to the belief that if the coach and the player pay attention to the fundamental techniques of the game; a commensurate improvement of his performance in the game will follow.

Our present knowledge in skill psychology indicate certain shortcomings in this belief. In the first place, it is reasonable to assume that the skill of soccer is different from the skill required by other activities. Some sports will have certain factors in common with soccer; others will have little or no similarity. In some games the techniques of the game almost correspond to the skill of the game. Billiards is a good example. Here a player has the problem of putting a ball into a pocket.
The problem is solved if his potting technique is good which is a matter between him, his cue control, and the ball. In other words, the skill environment is simple and predictable. In soccer the problem is complex and the environment largely unpredictable. The player needs accuracy and control in kicking or hitting the ball but his targets are moving; unlike those of the billiard players and even more importantly, his opponents are able to interfere with his intentions by a considerable variety of methods not least of which is physical challenge. A billiard player will gain considerable benefit from repetitive practice of technique since the practice situation bears a high degree of similarity to the competitive game. The same sort of practice of soccer however would overlook. The testing circumstances of competitive soccer skill requires the application of techniques in a situation where the player has co-operative possibilities and, at the same time, is opposed by one or more players. These factors require him make decisions and the ability to make correct decisions is probably the most important single
factor in developing skill at the game. It follows, therefore, that practice situations must include these elements.\(^8\)

For many motor skills, performance is a reliable means of evaluating instructional objectives. Some authors refer to such measures as Skill Tests or Rating Scales, which in a sense they are. However, it is important to remember that in this context the performance environment is also the evaluation environment. The instructional objectives and the performance may then be identical, and logical validity more readily assured.\(^9\)

The game skill is functional and is designed and produced to achieve a common objective and success, especially in a sport setting. That is perhaps, why now-a-days much greater emphasis is placed on the practice of and mastery over the basics of skill of a game right at the very beginning. Simple skills are not only easy to learn but are also easy to evaluate more objectively. Complex skills, on the other hand,


are learned only after simple skills are perfected and that is the reason why they are difficult to evaluate more objectively.

In measurement and evaluation literatures, a number of methods of skill evaluation have been mentioned. Some methods are objective, while others are subjective. Some are valid and reliable, while others are not. The obvious reason is that simple skills are easy to evaluate, while complicated ones are difficult to assess. The qualitative aspect of a skill performance is not easy to test objectively.

The participation in the sports warrants a fundamental desire to compete and surpass others. Every sports activity involves competitions. However, winning in competition surely depends on performance. Better the performance, the greater the chance of winning. The quality of performance displayed by the athletes in competitive events is determined by the kind of skill ability or playing ability involved in the game. Playing ability is found to be a strong predictor of any competitive sports.

Measurement of playing ability has two alternative procedures namely, skill testing through simulated test items and rating of ability
by judges in actual game situation. Though ideally the rating of playing ability provides a more comprehensive and accurate measure. Practical problems of getting qualified judges and lack of uniformity in different situations prevent wide use of this method. Skill testing through simulated items, on the other hand, can be standardized, is easier and provides objective measures of playing ability. The need of validating such skill test against sound criterion is usually, and quite successfully met by using judges' ratings of playing ability or tournament ranking as the criterion. Essential features of good sport skill tests include a minimum acceptable reliability, easy and accuracy of scoring and provision for diagnostic interpretation of test.\textsuperscript{10}

Sports skill test are designed to measure the basic skills used in playing of specific sports. Because of wide range of skills in most sports, a selection of most important skills becomes invariably necessary. The selection is usually based on experts' judgement or opinion or statistical analysis and skill items are called Test Battery.

The skill tests help the students to evaluate their performance in the game and to provide an impetus to improvement. The test also serves the purpose of helping a teacher to measure students’ performance and to evaluate his own teaching procedure and programme.¹¹

The skill tests require the creation of an environment similar to the game environment and the standardization of procedures for administration. The validity of skill tests can be judged in part by the extent to which the testing environment duplicates the playing environment. There are four general types of skill tests:

1. Accuracy tests: Accuracy tests require the subject to throw, strike, or kick an object at a target for accuracy. Examples are the basketball free throw, the badminton short serve, and the volleyball serve.

2. Wall volley tests: Wall volley tests require the subject to repeatedly strike, pass, throw or kick an object at a wall. The score may be the number of successful volleys completed during

a specified time period or the time required to execute a specified number of volleys.

3. Tests of total bodily movement: These tests require the subject to run a standardized test course using movements typical of the sport. Dribbling a basketball through an obstacle course is one example.

4. Throws, kicks, or strokes for power or distance: These require the subject to throw, kick, or strike an object (a football, shuttlecock, etc.) for distance.¹²

Though various studies have emphasized the relative importance of skill to playing ability in many games, as practical applicability of playing ability test on the basis of player’s skill proficiency has not been done so far. Hence, the research scholar felt the need for understanding such a study to develop or construct a criterion for objective measurement of playing ability of soccer players on the basis of their skill performance.
Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to construct the soccer playing ability test on the basis of skill performance of the players.

Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to 108 soccer players adopted by Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Eastern Region (Kolkata) and North-Eastern Region (Imphal and Guwahati).

2. The study was also delimited to men soccer players, age ranging between 15 to 19 years.

3. Further, the study was delimited to selected test items of the following fundamental skills of soccer –

   (i) Dribbling
   (ii) Kicking (passing and shooting)
   (iii) Receiving
   (iv) Heading
   (v) Feinting
   (vi) Tackling

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(vii) Ball sense

Limitations

1. Variations in performance due to climatic conditions, ground condition, player’s physical and psychological (motivational) factors that might affect the study, were considered as limitations of this study.

2. Inaccurate in supplying the ball, error in measurement and timing, which were recorded, due to human performance and perception which might affect the study were also be considered as limitations of this study.

Definition and Explanation of the Terms

Dribbling

It is the technique of moving the ball along the ground using the feet and keeping the ball under control.\textsuperscript{13}

\footnote{Beim, Principles of Modern Soccer, P. 339.}
Accuracy

According the Webster’s International Dictionary, “Accuracy” means the quality of being “exactness or correctness”. ¹⁴

So here, the accuracy means how exactly or correctly the ball is kicked to a particular target.

Stationary Ball

According the Webster’s International Dictionary, “Stationary” means, “having no moving parts”. ¹⁵

So here, the stationary ball means ball placed or kept on a particular place (unmoved ball) before the kick has been taken.

Aerial Ball

According the Webster’s International Dictionary, “Aerial” means, “raising high in the air”. ¹⁶

So here, the aerial ball means the ball moving above the ground.

¹⁴ Webster’s Third International Dictionary, (Massachusetts, USA: G & C Merriam Company), P. 13.
¹⁵ Ibid., P. 2229.
¹⁶ Ibid., P. 33.
Bouncing Ball

According the Webster’s International Dictionary, “Bounce” means, “to cause to rebound”.\textsuperscript{17}

So here, the bouncing ball means the ball rebounded from the ground, when it has been dropped or thrown from a certain height.

Feinting

According the Webster’s International Dictionary, “Feint” means, “something feigned or intended to deceive especially for an advantage”.\textsuperscript{18} Feint is a movement made by a player in an attempt to deceive the opponent.\textsuperscript{19}

Tackling

According the Webster’s International Dictionary, “Tackle” means, “to obstruct or interfere” with an opponent dribbling or playing the ball, so as to bring about loss of possession of ball.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., P. 260.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., P. 835.
\textsuperscript{19} Beim, Principles of Modern Soccer, P. 339.
\textsuperscript{20} Webster’s Third International Dictionary, P. 2326.
Tackle is the technique employed commonly by a defender to dispossess an opponent of the ball.\textsuperscript{21}

Tackling means, the act or skill of taking or attempting to take possession of the ball from an opponent.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Ball Sense}

It is the ability of the player to manoeuvre the ball with any part of his body except his hand and mostly by his feet.

\textbf{Validity}

A measurement concept that is concerned with the degree to which a measurement instrument actually measures what it purports to measure. Validity is not absolute, but depends on the context in which a measurement is used.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} Beim, Principles of Modern Soccer, P. 344.
\textsuperscript{22} Webster’s Third International Dictionary, P. 2326.
Face Validity

A test has face validity, if it appears obvious that it is a measure of the ability in question.\(^{24}\)

Face validity refers to the acceptability of a test and test situation by the tester in terms of apparent use to be made of a test. The test has face validity when it seemingly measures the variable in question.\(^{25}\)

Reliability

The reliability of a test or measure is the consistency with which the test or measure is reproducible under the same conditions with the same subjects.\(^{26}\)

Objectivity

Objectivity is often defined as the degree of agreement between different examiners who measure the same group of subjects in the performance of same activity.\(^{27}\)


Norms

Norms are values considered to be representative of a specified population. A test that has accompanying norms is definitely preferred to one that does not. Norms are usually based on age, grade, height, weight or various combinations of these characteristics.\(^{28}\)

A norm is a scale that permits conversion from a raw score to a score capable of comparisons and interpretations.\(^{29}\)

Factor Analysis

A statistical procedure that is used to reduce a large number of variables to a much smaller, representative set of variables, called ‘factors’. The object of factor analysis is to achieve parsimony, and often to discover the essential variables that underline and summarize the information in a large set of variables.\(^{30}\)

\(^{27}\) Ibid., P. 142.
\(^{28}\) Johnson and Nelson, Practical Measurement for Evaluation in Physical Education, P. 49.
\(^{29}\) Barrow and McGee, A Practical Approach to Measurement in Physical Education, P. 45.
Significance of the Study

There are various factors contributing for the top performance in today's competitive sports. The coach cannot analyze the strength and weakness of his players and predict their performance in competition without resorting to some measurement and evaluation procedure. Hence, it will be considered necessary to construct some skill tests of soccer, which determine the playing ability status of the players in various situations frequently. Moreover, the selection of a soccer player in a team is significantly related to the level of his mastery over the fundamental skills and playing ability of the game. With these facts in mind, the research scholar made an attempt to construct soccer playing ability test of male soccer players. The significance of the study are listed below:

1. The study may develop a specific playing ability test for soccer players.

2. The study may help in locating potential soccer players.

3. It may provide guidelines to soccer coaches to develop a specific skill testing programme for soccer players.
4. The test may help the coaches and physical education teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their training and coaching programme.

5. The study may serve as a motivational force to soccer players to improve their status of skill ability and playing ability.

6. The study may yield norms to be used for the evaluation, classification and selection of the players of different levels of competition.