**A-level PE - Coursework – Football**

**AA2 – Defensive skill**

**Analysis of performance**

**Identification of area of weakness:**

My main weakness when defending in football is the slide tackle.

**Explanation of area of weakness:**

I use the sliding tackle when I need to stretch to win the ball if I couldn’t reach the ball with a block tackle due to having a greater reach when using the sliding tackle. Because the slide tackle involves going to ground, it should only be used sparingly as it carries the risk of taking yourself out of the game or being cautioned/sent off.

For example, I primarily play central defensive midfielder. When our left-back is dispossessed and their right winger attacks with the ball it is the job of our left centre back to move over to left-back position and prevent a cross. At this point I drop back into centre back to pick up their centre forward or CAM. If the ball is picked up by the player I am marking I often find myself on the wrong side and am forced to make a slide tackle to prevent a shot.

I have selected the slide tackle as my main weakness area because my block tackles have a much higher success rate. Even though I have weaknesses with marking and jockeying these tend to occur further away from the goal whereas my errors with the technique of slide tackling are often more costly. This season we have conceded goals where I have gone to ground and created an overload for the other team. On one occasion I was cautioned for a a foul which put my team under pressure.

**Analysis of my slide tackle technique:**

My weakness in the preparation stage is that I don’t approach and come from the side to win the ball instead I will be behind the player with the ball. This mainly happens when I am approaching the player with the ball from the right-hand side of the player with the ball and running back towards my goal. This means that I must wrap my left foot around the player to make contact with the ball and win it which is tough because you don’t have as much of the ball to aim for and having to reach around the player to win the ball without making much contact with the player would be a foul due to me potentially tripping up the player and you can’t slide from behind in the rules. This is bad for me when I am approaching the player from the right as my left foot is weaker and is less accurate and precise so means when I am sliding in with the left foot trying to poke the ball away from the player from behind the player I am more likely to miss the ball and make contact with the player which would result in a foul.

Whereas the elite athletes will approach the player with the ball from the side as this means that the player can see where the ball is and so allows them to watch the ball which means that they can easily adjust their slide tackle in case the player with the ball moves it on to their other foot or changes direction. This means that they can adapt the slide tackle to the situation, the speed the player is running at or pull out of the slide tackle if the player starts shielding the ball from them with their leg and so minimise the chance of a foul occurring. Approaching from the side also means the players can time their slide tackle correctly as they have better view of the ball compared to running behind the player where the ball will be being shielded by the player and so the view will be restricted. Having a better view means that the player can respond or anticipate a heavy touch by the player with the ball which means that they are more likely to win the ball as they will perform the skill at the correct time. They will also know where the ball is and so will be able to aim the slide tackle cleanly at the ball rather than anticipating the position of the ball if you couldn’t see it due to being behind the player. This will mean they will know where to aim it and so will make a good contact with the ball and so they will be less likely to make contact with the oppositions ankle or foot, where as you are more likely to make contact with the player if you aren’t sure where the ball is and so you would commit more fouls and increase the chance of being shown a yellow or red card. When you are approaching the ball from the side of the player this give you a bigger angle to play the ball as you can see more of the ball, whereas if you are behind the player then the players ankles and feet will block the ball, meaning that to perform the slide tackle you would have to reach around the player to win the ball. This makes performing the slide tackle within the football rules tough as you can easily miss time the slide and you might not make contact with the ball and just trip the player up which could be very costly if the fouls is committed in the penalty box or just outside the penalty box. In addition, the referee could give you a yellow card especially if you mistimed the tackle and tripped up the player whilst he was running quickly on the counter attack. Having a large section of the ball to aim for means that you are more likely to g2et a good contact on the ball meaning that you can either be clearing the ball far away to stop it falling to one of the opposition to carry on the attack or push the ball to the side and so you can get up and collect the ball to gain possession for your team.

My next weakness in the preparation stage is that I take large strides instead of small steps so can’t decelerate quickly enough when nearing the player with the ball and which means that I don’t get into the correct position which is 45 degrees facing the player with the ball pushing them onto their weaker foot. I don’t slow down enough so this means that I am approaching too fast and so have less control when I do start to slide to win the ball this means that I am more likely to miss the ball or foul the player as I don’t have as much control and accuracy in my slide which results in me having a lower success rate for the tackle. As I am more likely to miss the football meaning that I will be out of position and so if I was one on one with them so they will have got passed me meaning that either a team mate will have had to cover for me and so they would be out of position or my opponent will be able to pass the ball, shoot the ball or cross the ball without pressure resulting in them being more likely to perform the skill better meaning they will score more goals as their might be an overload where I should be or they could be through on goal. As a central midfielder if I miss the ball then my opponent will have a free run at the centre backs meaning they can either shoot or I will have left the centre back exposed against both the centre midfielder and a striker which means that it will be a two vs one so they are more likely to be able to get past the centre back resulting in a one on one against the goalkeeper meaning they will probably score. If I do get both the ball and the player or just the player then I will commit a foul which means that I will of given away a free kick which as a centre midfielder could be in a good position to shoot or a good area to cross the ball in from both giving them chances to score from and as a team one of our weakness is defending free kicks which get crossed into the box due to the height of the team as we are quite a short team compared to the opposition so it then gives the opposition a chance to cross the ball and if the ball in is good then quite often they will get a clear header away which is risky because they could score from the situation. In addition, if I am committing too many fouls due to not slowing down before sliding then the referee will have to either give me a yellow card or red card. This would be for either a reckless tackle or excessive force or unsporting behaviour for tripping up a player on the attack or for multiple fouls If I was to slow down and be in more control of my slide I would win the ball back higher up the pitch creating attacking situations due to being in possession of the ball more and in areas of further forward and stopping the oppositions attack meaning the opposition will get fewer chances to score and we will have won the ball back high up the pitch meaning we should be able to create more goal scoring chances as the opposition should have fewer players back covering. As I haven’t slowed down enough I dive into the tackle instead of holding back and waiting for the player to try and dribble past me which would then make it easier for me to win the ball as the player can’t just dribble around me after I have committed myself whereas what the elite performers do is slow down and position themselves at a 45 degree angle forcing the player onto their weaker foot and then just hold them there until there is a chance to slide and then win the ball.

The professionals slow down when they are approaching the ball so that they are in control of the slide otherwise the slide wouldn’t be accurate enough as you would be sliding very quickly along the ground which means that you don’t have as long to prepare and do the execution stage of the skill. If you don’t slow yourself down enough then you don’t give yourself a chance to time the tackle correctly which would increase the chances of missing the ball or making contact with the opposition. In addition, when you are going in fast you lose the precision and accuracy of where you are moving you sliding leg and foot into which could mean you easily miss the ball due to not having the time to correct and the precision of where your sliding leg and foot are going and this could mean missing the ball and potentially making contact with the oppositions ankle or foot which would be a foul and if the referee is more likely to view it as you using excessive force which would be a red card due to the speed of the challenge meaning you exerted a large force on the opposition or at least a reckless challenge which would be a yellow card. Plus the way they position themselves gives them a greater chance of winning the ball by being at 45 degrees from the attacker pushing them on their weaker foot as they are just waiting for the player to try and skill them and so if they make a mistake then the defender can then slide along the floor and win the ball as they have forced the player to make a mistake and they are at the correct position and angle to win the ball successfully.

In addition, when approaching the player, I also am too upright with my knees do not bend. This means that its easier for the attacker to dribble past me as it takes me longer to react and respond to a player’s movements as I am stood upright and so I have adjusted my body before moving as well as not being able to jockey very well being stood upright. Where the pro footballers are in a slightly bend posture with their knees bend that they can make the tackle easier and react to any movements made by their opponent. They can also direct and jockey the player on to their weaker foot to create the tackling opportunity.

After approaching the player with the ball from the side and slowing down the next phase is, I started to slide along the floor. During this stage of the skill I jump up slightly up in the air before sliding along the ground which is my weakness for this section of the skill which makes the tackle very dangerous as I am going in at a fast speed compared to sliding along the floor which means that I am using excessive force and so if I do make contact with my opponent then I could of seriously injured due to the large force I am applying on them and as I have jumped up slightly my studs will be showing so this makes it very dangerous as I would be applying a large force downwards with my sharp stud into possibly the opponents ankle or foot which is a foul and would probably be a red card. I also stand less chance of a making a good contact on the ball if I were to win the ball as I would be making contact with the top of the ball and so the opposition could win the ball back. If I were to slide without jumping up slightly in the air beforehand, the advantage of sliding along the floor is that it means the player is going faster when sliding compared to running which means that I can slide to win the ball back when running back wouldn’t allow that. Therefore it would gives me a chance to slide and win the ball back if the attacker has got passed me as I can catch up to the striker by sliding along the floor where as I wouldn’t be able to win the ball back normally in that situation unless the attacker is slower than me running. The sliding tackle can be used as a last resort to block a shot or win a tackle if the attacker has been given space to run into and I couldn’t keep up or a striker has been given a chance to shot as I would be travelling faster and be quicker, to get my foot in the way of the shot or poke the ball away from the striker, due to sliding along the floor so I can have more chance of being able to get their foot in front of the ball before it has been shot or make the tackle.

When sliding I keep my arms beside my side which means that I am unbalanced and unstable, so I struggle to win the ball and be accurate when sliding. This means that there is increased chance of committing a foul due to sliding too fast due to the lack of balance and so giving the opposition a free kick in a dangerous position. The elite performers put their arms out so they have control and stability so they are more accurate so can be more precise with their sliding food so they stand a greater chance of regaining possession for their team whilst decreasing their chance of committing a foul by making contact with the opposition.

In the next phase of the skill I extend both my legs ahead of the ball with my foot extended and bend the non-sliding leg at the knee which I commit more fouls as I slide in with both my feets and so it becomes a scissor tackle which is a foul and you aren’t allowed to do two footed tackles as you are likely to endanger the opposition as the foot that doesn’t make contact with the ball is likely to make contact with the players ankles. Therefore, I commit more fouls and increase the likelihood of me receiving a yellow or even a red card for my tackle. Whereas the professionals bend their non-sliding leg at the knee but means that they aren’t sliding in with two feet and so aren’t going to catch their opponent with the other foot.

The next phase of the slide tackle I do is to move the sliding leg and foot into the ball and make contact with the ball with my studs however this causes me to have less control of the ball as I am just poking the ball with my studs instead of trying to get a cushioned contact with the instep to win the ball. Therefore, when I win the ball, I don’t always manage to keep possession after a slide tackle which means that as a team, we might have to defend again depending who wins the second ball. Sliding trying to win the ball with my studs facing the players makes it dangerous as I could badly injure the opponent depending how fast I am going which means that if I do make contact with the opponent then it will be a foul and the referee might give a yellow card or a red card which could both have a big impact on the team as they would struggle with 10 men and having to change formation and system because otherwise they would be a man down in the centre of midfield and a yellow card would restrict the challenges that I would go into because otherwise I could get sent off. Whereas the top elite performers make contact with the ball with the instep instead of studs this means that they can get more power behind the contact to clear the ball or use less power so they can push the ball to the side which gives them a chance to get up and collect the ball so they can retain possession and try to start an attack.

After making contact with the ball I don’t get up quick enough which means that I give the opposition the chance to win the ball back from tackle if they get up quickly then they might be able to collect the ball from my tackle if no one else has gained control of the ball so my team might have to do more defending and I can’t start any attacks by collecting the ball by getting up quickly. This also means that I am out of position and so they might be able to exploit the space where I should be after winning the ball and getting up and going back into my position. Whereas the best defenders get up and chase after the ball if they have knocked the ball to the side so they can try and retain possession so they can try and start a counter attack instead of just giving the ball back cheaply to the opposition and so more defending would be required. However, if they purposefully just cleared the ball far away if they were in danger of giving the ball away straight away the top defenders will get back into position.

My biggest weakness is that I don’t slow down enough when I am preparing to make a tackle which means that I just slide for the ball rather than slowing myself down and get myself side on so that I can force the player on to their weaker foot which would give me more of a chance to win the ball back due to me forcing the player onto his weaker foot which his touch wouldn’t be as good with and I haven’t slide in so soon I am not giving the player a chance to anticipate where I am committing myself and then dribbling around me. Not slowing down enough also means that I slide with more speed and power which can cause me to not be as accurate with my sliding foot or I might go in with excessive force and so commit a foul. This weakness occurs when going out to tackle the opposition right midfielder just inside our half in the second half towards the end of the match.

**Evaluation of performance**

**Cause of Weakness**

The cause of my biggest weakness is that I am over aroused and so lunge in for the ball and then make it easy for the player to dribble past me. Arousal is the degree of physiological and psychological readiness or activation. Through being over aroused I can be over enthusiastic and try to win the ball back quickly for my team however this means that I will running towards the man with the ball and then try to slide for the ball without slowing down and trying to position myself in the correct stance of 45 degrees pushing the player on to their weaker foot. This particularly occurs within the last 20 minutes of a game when arousal has increased during the game and especially if we are losing the game as I will feel that I need to win the ball back quickly due to feeling that time is running out and so we need to win the ball back quickly and then attack. However, this over arousal means that my performance decreases due to rushing in and not slow up and then positioning myself correctly and giving myself a better chance to slide and win the ball.

There are 4 theories of Arousal, one of these is Drive Theory which states that an increase in arousal means that the performers is more likely to perform their dominant response. The learning level affects what the response will be as a Cognitive learner will have a dominant response which is ill timed and incorrect however for an autonomous performer the dominant response will be fluent and correct which means that Autonomous performers can perform at a higher arousal. However, I don’t feel like this represents what happens to me as I feel that above medium arousal my slide tackle gets worse and I am less likely to win the ball as I don’t slow down enough but I feel that is because I am using my dominant response so I feel that my dominant response hasn’t been learned correctly and so that explains why when I get over aroused my performance drops, and that the point of optimum performance is a zone.

Therefore, I don’t feel that the Inverted U theory best states my weakness as it says that as arousal increases so does performance up to medium arousal where performance gradually decreases. The point where performance gradually decreases varies in accordance to the skill level, personality and task being undertaken. The more skilled athletes are affected less by increased level of arousal compared to less skilled athletes as they can cope with pressure and limited information. A simple skill can be performed at higher arousal as less information processing is required whereas for complex skill with lots of information processing it needs to be performed at low arousal. Introverts prefer low arousal as they normally have higher levels of adrenaline in the body compared to Extroverts. A complex skill is a skill where there are many decisions to make and a large amount of information to process before the skill gets performed. A slide tackle is a complex skill as I needed to watch and process the attacker dribbling and where the ball is in addition to process the information about the other players on the pitch. The optimum arousal varying due to personality makes sense as I am introvert, I will have a higher level of adrenaline which means I am getting too aroused so need a lower arousal level and slide tackling is a complex skill so needs lower arousal levels due to having lots of information processing to do therefore I feel this explains why I need a lower arousal level. However, I do feel that the once the level of optimum has increased then the level of performance suddenly decreases as there is too much information for me to process so that I don’t make the correct decisions and I don’t slow down enough and slide in too quickly without jockeying.

The theory which I feel explains my weakness is the Catastrophe theory which states that performance increases up to a point of medium arousal where the performance will decrease rapidly due to an increase in Cognitive or Somatic Anxiety, however the performer does have the chance that if they can reduce their arousal and anxiety then performance might return to the optimum performance. Cognitive Anxiety causes a loss of concentrations and involves worrying about performance and result and Somatic Anxiety involves an increase in muscle tension and an increased heart rate. Therefore I feel that I have increased levels of Cognitive Anxiety due to worrying about losing the game and wanting to win so that when that reaches a level then the performances drops as I am putting too much pressure on myself to win to and so due to the pressure I am putting on myself to win the ball to ensure that we win the game I then rush into tackles thinking I will win the ball and help the team win where as if I didn’t have the cognitive anxiety then it would mean that I wouldn’t put as much pressure in to win and so then I wouldn’t rush into the challenge without getting into position and slowing down and so reducing the chance of winning the ball by rushing in. I also get somatic anxiety as my heart rate increases a lot before I was rush into a challenge.

I will also use Attentional Control and Cue Utilisation which states that as stress and arousal increases then the ability to take in information reduces and important information is missed at high levels of arousal and stress but to reduce this I will use the Broad attention which allows a wide range of cues from environment to be processed which will mean that rather than just focusing in on the ball and sliding in for the ball, as I run towards the player I will be processing the information about the player with the ball and the surroundings so that I then get in the correct position and so I will be in a better position to win the ball and might be able to anticipate what the player will do rather than focusing on the ball and just sliding in for the ball which will mean I will slow down and get into position. Using Attentional control will lower the stress levels and the performance will improve. I will use the Attentional control every time I am approaching the player with the ball when there is a chance of winning the ball with a slide tackle.

Corrective Measure

In the final 5 minutes on the coach to the game, I will use Visualisation which is when the image of when you have done the skill successfully in training and the image is replayed when the skill is performed for real. I will do this by performing the skill in training whilst putting pressure on myself to make sure I succeed and so that its similar to the pressure to win in a game which means that I will have increased confidence when performing the skill as the experiences have already been dealt with. I will use an external image which concentrates on the environment and so I see myself slowing down and then positioning myself correctly and that I win the ball where as internal environment concentrates on the kinesthesis of the skill and the feelings involved in the skill. I will be using external as that will mean that I concentrate on slowing down the player and then jockeying and successfully sliding and winning the ball instead of the kinesthesis of sliding on winning the ball. As I am approaching the player with the ball, I will replay the image of me successfully doing the skill and how I did it.

In the changing rooms before the game, I will use Mental Rehearsal before the game as this will lower by cognitive anxiety and increase my confidence. I will do this by going through performances in my mind before the game. The mental rehearsal will mean that I will be better prepared and so my reaction speed will increase as well as my decision making so I wouldn’t have to rush into challenges and I will win the ball through being calmer and having lower anxiety. I will do this in the final couple of minutes before going out to play. I will rehearse jockeying the player before then sliding to win the ball and then getting up to start an attack.

During half time I will use centring to distract myself away from the tense game. At the start of half time I will close my eyes and take a few big, deep breaths. When I breathe in, I will imagine that the air is filled with a sense of peace and calm and I will try to feel it throughout your body. Then breathe out and whilst I am doing that, I will imagine that the air leaves my stresses and tension. After this I will breathe in, I will say in my mind “I breathe in peace and calm” and whilst I breathe out, I will say in my mind “I breathe out stress and tension.” I will do this for 5 to 10 minutes. Doing this at half time will lower my cognitive anxiety which will have increased whilst playing and so using centring will lower my cognitive anxiety by focusing on the breathing rather than on the game and what I have done badly in the first half. When I go out for the second half I will be relaxed and have a low cognitive anxiety then I would if I have spent half time worrying which will mean that I will slow down before jockeying and sliding in.

At breaks in play I will use positive self-talk, by replacing my negative thoughts with positive thoughts. I will use this in breaks of play by removing negative thoughts by giving myself a positive self-talk telling myself that we can win the game if I don’t rush into challenges and position myself at a 45 degree stance pushing the player on the ball onto their weak foot and so I will stand a better chance of winning the ball. This will help overcome my bad habit of not slowing down enough when going to make a sliding tackle and not positioning myself correctly as I will have focused on my weakness which will mean that I will be thinking and focused on slowing down and positioning myself correctly. For example, my negative thoughts are “We will lose this match”, “I’m not playing very well” or “I am letting the team down” and the positive thoughts I will replace them with are “We can win this just calm down and slow yourself before sliding into tackles” or “You are playing well but just make sure you jockey before sliding into the tackle”.