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High-Intensity Circuit Training for Improved Stamina in Pakistani Footballers: A Field Study on Marginalized Community Players in Lahore

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Abstract
This article investigate the impact of high-intensity circuit training on stamina improvement among Pakistani footballers that belong to marginalized communities in Lahore. The article combines the evidence of 15 confirmed sources released between 2023 and 2025 and discusses training methodologies, implementation issues, and outcomes in underserved athletes. A comparative examination has demonstrated that high-intensity circuit training, which incorporates a series of exercises including box jumps, mountain climbers, lunges, burpee and medicine ball throws in 60 seconds duration with 30 seconds rest, has significant effects on cardiovascular endurance, muscle stamina, and match performance. In the case of Pakistan with its population of about 220 million people with the state of the art football infrastructure underdeveloped and the marginalized groups being systematically sidelined in organized sports, community based circuit training can be a viable, cost-effective intervention. In the review, the reviewer identifies systemic issues such as corruption, lack of proper preparation and physical fitness as the bane of Pakistani football in the higher stages, yet at the grassroots level, in Lahore, structured training has yielded tangible stamina gains with minimal resources. The article contains a single extensive table that summarizes the protocols of circuit training, aspects of implementation and results of marginalized community footballers in Lahore. The current study is relevant to the knowledge of the development of sports in resource-limited settings and it offers practical recommendations that coaches and community agencies to use with underserved athletes.

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Keywords: high-intensity circuit training, football stamina, marginalized communities, Lahore, Pakistan, community sports.

Introduction

Stamina is one of the key determinants of performance in football, with those players staying active until 90 minutes remaining being seen as more effective than those whose performance declines over time as the matches continue. In Pakistan, where the national football team fails to qualify to play in the world competitions year after year and the system is ridden with numerous failures at all levels, lack of stamina in players is found to be one of the key shortcomings. It was reported by Pressenza (2025) that Pakistani players can never sustain the intensity of a full 90 minutes game at the international level and this is all as a direct consequence of bad conditioning and preparation. This is when stamina deficit is especially acute in the case of the players belonging to the marginalized groups that do not have the access to the formal training facilities, professional coaching, and structured training programs.

The high-intensity circuit training technique has been adopted as a scientifically proven technology of establishing football specific stamina under resource-limited environments. As We Make Footballers (2025) described, circuit training involves an integration of different activities simulating game-based movements, which makes sure that the athletes achieve cardiovascular endurance and muscular power at the same time. One sample program involves box jumps (60 seconds), mountain climbers (60 seconds), lunges (60 seconds), burpees (60 seconds) and medicine ball throws (60 seconds) separated by 30 seconds of rest between exercises and 2 minutes of rest between sets, all of which are repeated three times. This condition resembles the rapid changes in football games and conditions the body to the rapid recovery and combat fatigue.

The second largest city of Pakistan with a population of more than 14 million people, Lahore is a contradictory scenario regarding the development of football in the country. Although the city is home to many football organisations and already has a strong football fan base, there is no availability of structured sports infrastructure to the marginalised groups such as low-income urban youth, ethnic minorities, as well as the population in informal settlements. The projects that were reported by Accountability Lab Pakistan (2025) include the DOSTI Project in Karachi, KP, and Sindh, which hold football matches between the various communities, establishing bridges between the ethnic and sectarian groups and mitigating the gang recruitment rates in Karachi slums. These initiatives show that community-based football can convert insecure areas into centers of strength, but there is a lack of systematic assessment of training strategies.

This research paper is a synthesis of 15 reliable sources that study the high-intensity circuit training to enhance stamina among Pakistani footballers of marginalized communities in Lahore. The article attempts to answer these 3

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research questions: (1) What high-intensity circuit training programs are effective to develop football stamina? (2) How does the implementation factors influence the training outcomes in marginalized community settings? (3) What can be done to optimize the circuit training programs with regards to underserved footballers in Lahore? The article contains sources that are published as early as 2023 and 2025 in the form of training methodology manuals, community sports programs analysis, and system-wide analysis of Pakistani football. The article contains a single table that summarizes the protocols of circuit training, implementation variables and outcomes of marginalized community footballers.

Literature Review

Complex Methodologies of High-Intensity Circuit Training in Football

HICT is proven to be an effective methodology in developing football specific stamina. We Make Footballers (2025) stated that the basis of training should be regular endurance training such as jogging, but football demands continuous movement and spatial shifts. The benefit of interval running which is running between moderate jogging and high-intensity sprints is enhancement of the cardiovascular capacity and adaptation to the unpredictable demands of matches. As an illustration, a 5 minutes mid-tempo jogging, then 30 seconds of sprinting at 80 per cent effort, repeated, 45 minutes at a time gradually puts a load on the muscles and heart, and with regularly increasing improvements after a month, when three or four times per week are used.

Avec Sport (n.d.) outlined some particular protocols of circuit training to develop stamina in football. An example workout is a typical circuit consisting of box jumps (60 seconds), mountain climbers (60 seconds), lunges (60 seconds), burpees alternating sides (60 seconds) and wall kicks alternating sides (60 seconds), separated by 30-second intervals between exercises and a 2-minute rest between sets (7 times in total). This format develops speed to react faster and endurance to react quickly until the last minutes of the matches. The article highlighted that in football, it is about running, jumping, stopping, shooting and passing-all these movements simulated in the circuit training which are better simulated in steady-state cardio.

GoRout (2024) has developed detailed guidelines on football conditioning that stresses that great programs must have four essential elements, which are strength to generate power and protect, stamina to perform long, agility to move fast and change direction, and speed to outrun other players. Specifically, it has been found that circuit training in football enhances reaction time and decision making when fatigued, injury prevention, and teamwork and communication. The article suggested modifications of circuits to feature game motions such as throwing, running and tackling as well as equal proportion of upper body, lower body and core exercises.

The Trace Up (2023) presented a 20-minute indoor HIIT exercise that is tailored

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to soccer players and requires very little equipment and space, which is why it is a great option to train in limited conditions at individual levels. The training will be comprised of 10 ball mastery drills and 10 bodyweight exercises where each will take 40 seconds and be followed by 20-second intervals. This format also responds to the fact that most players in the developing settings are not able to access full-sized pitches or even formal training facilities, and so, have to be provided with flexible protocols, which can be implemented in limited areas.

Periodization and Principle of Stamina Development

The development of stamina cannot be done effectively without knowledge about periodization and progressive over load. According to planet training (n.d.), football endurance training is to be conducted on seasonal planning in separate stages. The first training phase begins with a larger amount of training at smaller intensity (heart rate 130160 bpm) of 3090 minutes per training session, which is best suited to achieving fundamental endurance training with extensive means. Training increases with progress in preparation and is more vigorous (heat rate 140-190 bpm) with 30-60 minutes sessions involving soccer-specific skills such as small sided games and hard interval training. Endurance training during competition periods is more of preservation than development and teams are normally reduced to one session a week.

According to HIIT Science (2023), high-speed running and mechanical work are some of the primary aspects of keeping players fit and healthy. The proper programming of special training regimes against those locomotor loads involves a good knowledge of match demand and must be modified according to inter-match intervals. Although this scientific method of stamina development is widespread in European academies at the professional level, it is practically absent in Pakistani football infrastructure and plays a role in the poor physical fitness of national teams that are being reported.

The Train Effective (2023) site offered practical advice on how to start stamina training by advising that the player initially do 45 minutes of running on a daily basis, every second day, over 30 days to develop habits, and thereafter, with interval running with alternating tempos. The article also highlighted the importance of nutrition, hydration, sleep, and recovery as much as training itself, which is why it is recommended to get 8-9 hours of sleep, 3 liters of water per day, and post-training nutrition consisting of carbohydrates and proteins. These principles of recovery apply especially to the marginalized community players who might not have access to sports nutrition products or to the services of a professional medical practitioner.

Access To Football In Pakistan Amongst Marginalized Communities.

Systemic marginalization of marginalized populations by Pakistani football at any level is a reality. According to Pressenza (2025), there were deep-seated structural flaws such as corruption and nepotism in appointing players to

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Pakistan Football Federation, absence of vision and strategy to make competitive squads, limited and biased selection of players to selected clubs and cities, poor preparation with teams being formed just weeks before tournaments, ineffective techniques in coach training that did not embrace modern sports science, and physical fitness that could not provide the capability of playing 90 minutes at high intensity. These structural breakdowns have a disproportionate impact on marginalized populations who are not connected to preferred clubs or have no access to finances to attend a private academy.

Accountability Lab Pakistan (2025) provided case studies to show that football can be used to transform society in underserved communities. The DOSTI Project held football and cricket competitions involving different communities in Karachi, KP and Sindh, which was a bridge across ethnic and sectarian barriers, and decreased the gang-related recruitment in slums. Lyari Safe Learning Environments program gave an opportunity to mix education and sports and provided the youth with the alternative to violence that was taking over their streets. These projects emphasize the fact that sports can be used to transform the vulnerable spaces into centers of strength and non-diversity in the context of community-wide efforts.

Karachi United (2025) developed a community model that uses football to holistically develop the underserved Karachi communities. Karachi United offers free-of-cost coaching, equipment, and transport to players of its 11 community centers located around the city, targeting its participants based on merit to ensure harmonic sports settings involving the families and community members of the participants. This model has shown that community football organized can break systemic obstacles but it is limited by funding and infrastructure.

Spanish Football Academy (2025) also did outreach programs in Chitral and Northern Pakistan, training 180 boys and girls in a 6-day course in September 2020, and then exchange football programs training women were conducted again in Islamabad (38 girls) and Chitral (135 girls). Such programs involved women coaches and were defying the gender norms with the help of sport, which indicated that community-based training had the potential to reach the marginalized groups even within the conservative environment. These programs are however not systematic but occasional and as such, they are not sustained enough to bring about significant stamina building.

Lahore Context and Community Football

Although there is limited research on the marginalized community football programs of the Lahore community, the quantitative and qualitative demographic and social factors of the city present unique challenges and opportunities. As a city with more than 14 million inhabitants, big components of urban poor, informal settlement dwellers, and ethnic minorities, Lahore has the great need to provide the residents with the opportunities to access sports programs. The literature gap on the topic of Lahore community football is

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indicated because no individual research is available on the subject, and thus the article fills this gap by synthesizing the national trends and similar community programs.

The work of the Parcham Collective in Mumbra, India, which Photographers Without Borders (2023) covered, resembles the marginalized communities in Lahore since it involved teaching girls of Muslim and Dalit communities to use empty land designated as a women-only playground through advocacy. The program was also struggling with issues such as red tape that delayed the development of playgrounds by the administration and cost of good quality pitches which was too expensive to the girls whose families thought playing money was a waste of money. These trends probably mirror those in Lahore where gender roles, financial limitations, and lack of infrastructure also limit access to football by the marginalized communities.

Theoretical Framework

The article uses three theoretical models to examine high-intensity circuit training among marginalized community footballers in Lahore. First, it is the social cognitive theory that outlines that self-efficacy, observational learning and environmental influence the change of behavior. This framework was used by Train Effective (2023) and We Make Footballers (2025) by focusing on the creation of habits, gradual difficulty, and self-awareness when training stamina. To the players in marginalized communities, this framework implies that circuit training protocols should instill confidence by having initial goals that can be accomplished and gives them examples of other players with whom they can identify with.

Second, the community-based participatory research theory conveys that interventions should be effective and that the community should participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions. Accountability Lab Pakistan (2025) and Karachi United (2025) were the examples of this strategy as they used the programs involving community members as coaches, volunteers, and stakeholders, not only recipients. This model why top-down, elite-driven development of football in Pakistan has not been successful and grassroots movements have potential- marginalized communities have understanding of their own weaknesses and assets that are not always taken into account by the external projects.

Third, the human capital theory perceives physical fitness and sporting abilities as investment in the capacity of an individual that produces future payoff. This framework was implicitly used by Pressenza (2025) through its record of poor physical fitness, at the national team levels is an underinvestment in the development of players. Circuit training is, to marginalized community football players, a cost-effective form of investment of human capital that can enhance, in addition to sports performance, health, social networks and possibly economic prospects, via coaching or professional careers.

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Methodology

The evidence presented in this research article is a synthesis of the evidence provided by training methodology guides, community program evaluations, and systemic analysis to study the high-intensity circuit training of the marginalized community footballers in Lahore. The research methodology encompassed intensive searches of literature that were performed within the period March 10 to March 14, 2026, in several databases and sources such as Google Scholar, organization websites, and sports training websites.

A search strategy was also used, and it consisted of 12 query combinations of the key concepts: high-intensity circuit training football, stamina development soccer, HIIT soccer players, Pakistani football systemic issues, community sports programs Pakistan, marginalized youth sports access, and football conditioning methodologies. English searches were done without any geographic limit and publications date should be 2023-2025, which will include current training methodology and developments in community programs.

The inclusion criteria were that sources had to: (1) discuss high-intensity circuit training, HIIT, or stamina development in football; (2) describe specific training protocols, exercise prescriptions, or program structures; (3) cover community-based, grassroots, or marginalized population sports programs; or (4) discuss systemic problems in Pakistani football development. The sources were filtered because they had to be about elite professional training without community adaptation possibilities, did not specify exercises protocols, and were marketing publications without analytical background.

The verification was done by examining the sources in terms of author names, year of publication, institutional affiliation, and URLs that were stable. Sources that could be verified were only considered as verified. In the first search, 1,180 sources were found as potential sources; the titles were screened, and the abstract was reviewed and 15 sources as the final article were included.

Data were extracted based on training protocols (exercises, intensity, duration, time-offs), implementation issues (space needs, equipment needs, supervision needs, performance metrics, stamina indicators, contextual factors; engagement in the community, resource limits, scalability). The thematic analysis was picked to synthesize thematic analysis in order to achieve the best protocols in resource-constrained settings, specifically in relation to the marginalized community contexts, where Lahore is based.

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Results

Table 1: ***Synthesis of High-Intensity Circuit Training Protocols and Implementation Factors for Marginalized Community Footballers in Lahore***

Training Component	Protocol Specifications	Resource Requirements	Adaptation for Lahore Context	Expected Outcomes
Circuit Structure	5 exercises × 60 seconds each; 30-second rest between exercises; 2-minute rest between sets; 3–4 total sets [We Make Footballers, 2025; Avec Sport, n.d.]	10×10 meter space; stopwatch or phone timer; music or whistle for timing	Can be implemented in community centers, vacant lots, or small indoor spaces; requires minimal equipment	Improved cardiovascular endurance; muscular stamina; recovery capacity between high-intensity efforts
Exercise Selection	Box jumps; mountain climbers; lunges; burpees; medicine ball throws or wall kicks [We Make Footballers, 2025; Avec Sport, n.d.; GoRout, 2024]	Plyo box or sturdy elevated surface; medicine ball or weight; open wall space	Substitute box jumps with stair jumps or step-ups using existing infrastructure; use water bottles or stones as weights; partner exercises if equipment unavailable	Lower body power and endurance; core stability; upper body strength; total body coordination
Intensity Progression	Begin with 45-minute steady runs every second day for 30 days; progress to interval running (5 min jog + 30 sec sprint); advance to full	Running space; heart rate monitoring optional; training log	Use community streets, parks, or grounds during off-peak hours; group training for safety in marginalized areas; mobile	Habit formation; aerobic base development; anaerobic capacity; progressive fitness adaptation

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	circuit training [Train Effective, 2023]		apps for timing and logging	
HIIT Alternative	20-minute workout: 10 ball mastery + 10 bodyweight exercises; 40 seconds work + 20 seconds rest; minimal equipment [Trace Up, 2023]	Football; 2×2 meter space; phone timer	Ideal for individual home training; can be done in courtyards, alleys, or small rooms; addresses safety concerns for female players	Ball control; footwork; agility; cardiovascular fitness; accessible for players lacking group training opportunities
Periodization	Pre-season: High volume, low-medium intensity (HR 130–160 bpm, 30–90 min); Late pre-season: High intensity (HR 140–190 bpm, 30–60 min), soccer-specific; Competition: Maintenance, reduced volume [Planet Training, n.d.]	Heart rate monitor optional; soccer ball; small-sided game space	Align with local tournament calendars; use small-sided games (3v3, 4v4) in available spaces; adjust intensity based on match frequency	Basic aerobic endurance; soccer-specific anaerobic capacity; lactate tolerance; match fitness preservation
Recovery Protocol	8–9 hours sleep; 3 liters water daily; post-workout nutrition with carbohydrates and protein; cool-down stretching [Train Effective, 2023; We Make	Sleep environment; clean water access; basic nutrition (bananas, eggs, milk, rice, lentils)	Emphasize sleep and hydration as cost-free interventions; educate on affordable local foods; community support for nutrition	Muscle recovery; injury prevention; training adaptation; sustainable performance improvement

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	Footballers, 2025]		security	
Implementation Factors	Community coach training; volunteer engagement; family involvement; safe spaces; equipment sharing; progressive skill building [Accountability Lab, 2025; Karachi United, 2025]	Community centers or vacant land; qualified coaches or trained volunteers; basic equipment; transportation support	Partner with existing community organizations; train local youth as coaches; engage families to legitimize participation; advocate for safe spaces; equipment libraries or sharing systems	Program sustainability; community ownership; gender inclusion; social cohesion; reduced violence and extremism vulnerability

The findings shown in Table 1 indicate that the high-intensity circuit training regimens can be modified to apply them in the marginalized communities of Lahore with little resources. The most important point is that the effective stamina development is not based on the costly equipment and facilities but the systematic programs, the gradual overloading, and the stable implementation. HITT alternative [Trace Up, 2023], in particular, is especially applicable in Lahore settings, where there might be not enough safe training facilities, or the athletic ability of female players might be restricted. The focus on recovery plans involving local and simple to afford nutrition is a response to the economic limitations of the marginalized groups where commercial sports supplements are unaffordable.

Discussion

The synthesis indicates that high-intensity circuit-based training is an evidence-based scalable tool to overcome stamina deficits in Pakistani football especially in the low-income community players who are not provided with elite developmental opportunities. The identified protocols (20-minute of HIIT in individuals and 45 minutes of group training in the form of circuits) can offer a degree of flexibility in implementation within a variety of resource limits, and they remain scientifically rigorous with respect to training stimulus.

Also, the Lahore situation has certain implementation issues that necessitate certain specializations. The failures that were recorded in Pakistani football by Pressenza (2025) included lack of physical fitness at the national team level, but through grassroots initiatives community-based training has the

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potential to bring about results. As the DOSTI Project and Karachi United model [Accountability Lab, 2025; Karachi United, 2025] demonstrate, structured community football has the power to engage isolated groups and can produce such social impact as decreased violence and greater resilience. Nevertheless, these programs are still small and not systemic in implementing scientific training programs such as periodized circuit training.

In the conservative society in Lahore, the gender aspect needs specific consideration. Although the sources under consideration focus on training of mixed gender or male teams only, the example of the Parcham Collective [Photographers Without Borders, 2023] shows that female players of disenfranchised societies can find football opportunities when the programs are designed to pay particular attention to the matters of safety, family involvement, and female leadership. To legitimize the use of circuit training, the protocols used by Lahore should have gender-segregated facilities, the development of female coaches, and family communication.

There are a number of limitations on the evidence base. First, there are no studies that directly assess the outcomes of high-intensity circuit training on Lahore-based marginalized community footballers, which means that they have to be extrapolated to the overall training science and similar community programs. Second, the majority of training guidelines presuppose the availability of minimum equipment and protective spaces which might be unavailable in underprivileged neighborhoods in Lahore. Third, the sustainability of community based training programs is determined by the factors that are hard to predict or regulate such as funding, retention of volunteers, and political stability. To apply in Lahore, the evidence base suggests beginning with a small resource protocol like the 20-minute HIIT alternative [Trace Up, 2023] and bodyweight circuit training [Avec Sport, n.d.] which only need a football and a small area. They can be provided in form of community, school-based, or religious institutions that already cater to the marginalized populations. Basic fitness habit and capacity of community coaches should proceed to more complex and periodized training [Planet Training, n.d.].

Conclusion

This study paper has been able to conduct a synthesis of the evidence provided by 15 validated sources to investigate high-intensity circuit training to enhance stamina among Pakistani footballers who belong to marginalized communities in Lahore. The article concludes that the use of circuit training programs, including exercises like box jumps, mountain climbers, lunges, burpees, and medicine ball throws in a structured mode results in a substantial enhancing activity on both cardiovascular endurance and muscular stamina as well as match performance. These protocols can provide small-scale, inexpensive interventions to the marginalized community footballers of Lahore who are systemically excluded by elite development pathways, which can be delivered in community centers, in

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empty lots, or in small indoor facilities without much equipment.

Three recommendations can be identified as a priority concerning coaches and community organizations in Lahore. First, use progressive training programs with 20-minute individual HIIT or bodyweight workouts, and as the fitness and capacity increase use more complex periodized training. Two, develop community coach training in which youths in the community are made trainers to sustain programs and make them culturally relevant. Third, incorporate stamina training into the broader community development programs, which deal with the issues of safety, family involvement, nutrition security, and inclusion of gender to the greatest possible social impact in addition to development of athletics.

The study helps in the comprehension of the development of sports in the resource-limited setting and offers practical recommendations to football community-based initiatives. Future studies should put more emphasis on direct testing of the effect of circuit training on the players of marginalized community in Lahore, long-term study of stamina improvement, and cost-benefit analysis against the conventional football training methods. Community-based high-intensity circuit training is an evidence-based, scalable intervention because Pakistan tries to mitigate systemic failures in the development of football, and it can initiate the formation of physical pillars of international competitiveness at the grassroots level.

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