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64 Abstract

To date, the monitoring of fast bowling workloads across training and competition 65 environments has been limited to counting total balls bowled. However, bowling at faster 66 velocities is likely to require greater effort while also placing greater load on the bowler. This 67 68 study investigated the relationship between prescribed effort and microtechnology outputs in fast bowlers to ascertain whether the technology could provide a more refined measure of 69 workload. Twelve high performing fast bowlers (mean \pm SD age; 20.3 \pm 2.2 yr) participated in 70 71 this study. Each bowler bowled 6 balls at prescribed bowling intensities of 60%, 70%, 85% 72 and 100%. The relationship between microtechnology outputs, prescribed intensity and ball 73 velocity were determined using polynomial regression. Very large relationships were observed between prescribed effort and ball velocity for peak PlayerLoadTM ($R = 0.83 \pm 0.19$ and $0.82 \pm$ 74 0.20). The Player LoadTM across lower ranges of prescribed effort exhibited higher coefficient 75 of variation (CV) [60% = 19.0 (17.0 - 23.0)%] while the CV at higher ranges of prescribed 76 77 effort was lower [100% = 7.3 (6.4 - 8.5)%]. Routinely used wearable microtechnology devices 78 offer opportunities to examine workload and intensity in cricket fast bowlers outside the normal

79 metrics reported. They offer a useful tool for prescribing and monitoring bowling intensity and

- 80 workload in elite fast bowlers.
- 81 Keywords: Workload; Microsensors; Team Sport; Training
- 82
- 83

84 Introduction

85 Cricket, like many other popular international team sports, requires varying player types to perform very specific roles within the team. One of these roles within cricket is fast bowling. 86 Fast bowlers are required to bowl at high ball velocities to opposition batters. Fast bowling has 87 been associated with greater injury risk in comparison to other playing activities.¹ Fast bowling 88 injury rates have been associated with both poor technique and bowling workloads.¹⁻³ A current 89 method of monitoring the preparedness of fast bowlers includes both planning and reviewing 90 the chronic (28 day average) and acute (7 day average) bowling loads.⁴ Although this provides 91 a general view of the preparedness of the fast bowler, it fails to account for the range of bowling 92 93 intensities across sessions, their contribution to the overall load and ultimately, preparedness.⁵ 94 While it is possible that coaches could subjectively identify periods of high bowling intensity, this can become relatively unstructured and fail to account for the individual bowler's fatigue 95 responses to workloads. The method of monitoring bowling speed is a possible indicator of 96 97 intensity, although practical limitations exist with this method. Individual fast bowlers are 98 routinely spread across varying training nets or often competing at different locations; considerable resources are required to allow sport scientists to collect this data. 99 100 Understandably, bowling velocity also acts as a performance indicator and provides meaningful data to coaches, particularly in match-play.⁶ While bowling velocity may provide 101 102 a simple option for measuring intensity in a single controlled bowling session, when multiple 103 bowlers are performing across various sessions and locations this process becomes somewhat laborious and difficult. 104

105

106 Various team sports, including Australian Football and Rugby League, use microtechnology and global positioning system (GPS) devices to monitor external workload.⁷⁻⁹ In addition to 107 GPS data, a combination of accelerometers (electromechanical device that measures 108 109 acceleration forces), gyroscopes (electronic device that measures rotation around three axes: x, y, and z) and magnetometers (electronic device that measures magnetic fields) provide 110 information on external workloads.^{10,11} Accelerometer loads has been shown to have 111 acceptable stability across 3, 6 and 12 over bowling spells.⁶ In addition to a tri-axial 112 accelerometer, gyroscopes capable of detecting rotation about the yaw, pitch and roll axes are 113 housed within this unit. Microtechnology has also been successful in detecting fast bowling 114 events in elite cricketers.¹² This technology allows for retrospective analysis of external 115 workload in large groups of athletes and does not require a coach or sport scientist to be present 116 117 at the time of data collection. This method of load monitoring is important to cricket as players often train in de-centralized programs or are required to participate for various domestic teams 118 119 across the world within the same competitive year. These units are not limited to training 120 environments and are commonly worn during competition in many sports including cricket. 121

122 Although the use of this technology to monitor fast bowling intensity is yet to be validated, it 123 does provide opportunity to further advance the workload monitoring of elite fast bowlers 124 during training and competition. This would allow insightful data for the prescription of 125 individual fast bowling workloads. Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess the 126 relationship between prescribed bowling intensities, bowling velocity and data outputs from

- 127 wearable microtechnology during a training environment to ascertain whether the technology
- 128 could provide a more refined measure of bowling workload and intensity.
- 129

130 Methods

131

132 Subjects

Twelve elite fast bowlers (mean \pm SD age; 20.3 \pm 2.2 yr) participated in this study. At the time of the study all players were participants in a national level high performance camp. All participants were free from injury or other medical conditions that would compromise participation. Participants received a clear explanation of the study, and written consent was obtained. The Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee approved all experimental procedures.

139

140 Design

This cohort study required participants to complete six deliveries in four categories of effort; 141 1. warm up (~60%), 2. light intensity (~70%), 3. match-play (~85%), and 4. maximal effort 142 143 (~100%). All bowlers completed the bowling protocol in the same pre-determined order and 144 replicated an assessment protocol routinely used by Cricket Australia. To help represent the varying bowling lengths in cricket match-play, during the 85% (match-play) and 100% 145 (maximal effort) overs, each player bowled two short balls, two full balls and two good length 146 147 balls. No balls, wides, balls bowled with illegal actions and those that were not performed at the prescribed bowling length were excluded from analyses. All data were collected in a 148 149 purpose built indoor facility. Bowling run up lengths were self-selected, and were not limited by the size of the indoor facility. This data were monitored and confirmed by a cricket coach. 150 Measures of bowling intensity included a subjective measure of prescribed effort, bowling 151 152 velocity and outputs from wearable microtechnology.

153

154 Methodology

155 Bowling Intensity – Ball Velocity

Ball velocity was measured for each delivery using a high performance sports radar gun accurate to \pm 3% (Stalker Pro, Stalker Sports Radar, Piano, Texas) positioned at the batters end of the cricket pitch.¹³ No bowling velocity feedback was provided to the bowlers. A relative ball velocity score was calculated as a percentage of the individual bowlers peak ball velocity across the 24 balls bowled.

161

162 Bowling Intensity – Microtechnology

Data from the accelerometers and gyroscopes embedded in the microtechnology device 163 (MinimaxX S4, Catapult Innovations, Melbourne, Australia) were extracted from the 164 165 commercially available software (Sprint Version 5.0.9.2, Catapult Innovations, Melbourne, 166 Australia) for each ball bowled. Both the accelerometers and gyroscopes collected data at 100 Hz. PlayerLoadTM and the resultant accelerometer vector were calculated from each of the X, 167 Y and Z vectors. In this study, PlayerLoadTM was calculated as the square root of the sum of 168 the squared instantaneous rate of change in acceleration in each of the three vectors (X, Y and 169 Z axis) and divided by 100.9,11 The resultant accelerometer was calculated as 170

- 171 $r = (x^2 + y^2 + z^2)^{0.5}$. Roll (x-axis lateral flexion during bowling) and yaw (z-axis rotation at 172 the thoracic spine during the bowling action) gyroscope velocity outputs were collected from 173 the microtechnology device for each ball bowled. Peak measures of PlayerLoadTM, 174 accelerometer resultant, yaw velocity and roll velocity during the delivery stride were used for 175 analysis of each ball. A percentage relative to the individual bowlers peak score across the 24 176 balls bowled was calculated for each ball across all variables. Measures of roll have previously 177 been used to distinguish fast bowling events within cricket practice and competition.¹²
- 178

179 Statistical Analyses

Data were tested for normality prior to analysis using a Shapiro-Wilk test. The relationship 180 between the microtechnology outputs and both prescribed effort and ball velocity were 181 analyzed using polynomial regression in SPSS (IBM Corp, Armonk, USA) and expressed as 182 R. These relationships were described as trivial (0.0 - 0.1), small (0.1 - 0.3), moderate (0.3 - 0.3)183 0.5), large (0.5 - 0.7), very large (0.7 - 0.9) or nearly perfect (0.9 - 1.0).¹⁴ A custom Microsoft 184 Excel spreadsheet (Microsoft, Redmond, USA) was used to calculate both between and within 185 subject coefficient of variation (CV) with 90% confidence intervals to describe the variability 186 187 across intensity levels.

188189 Results

Peak PlayerLoadTM showed very large relationships ($R = 0.83 \pm 0.19$) with prescribed effort for each ball bowled (Table 1, Figure 1). Relative ball velocity was also associated with peak PlayerLoadTM ($R = 0.82 \pm 0.20$) for each ball bowled (Table 1, Figure 1). Table 1 shows the large to very large relationships of both peak yaw ($R = 0.58 \pm 0.36$), roll ($R = 0.73 \pm 0.27$) and resultant accelerometer ($R = 0.64 \pm 0.33$) for each ball bowled.

195

196 <<<< Insert Table 1 here >>>>

- 197 <<<< Insert Figure 1 here >>>>
- 198

Table 2 demonstrates that as bowling effort increased, measures of intensity began to stabilize. 199 Measures of CV in Peak PlayerLoadTM were calculated as 19.0% (17.0 – 23.0), 14.0% (12.0 – 200 16.0), 9.6% (8.4 - 11.0) and 7.3% (6.4 - 8.5) across the prescribed 60% (warm up), 70% (light 201 intensity), 85% (match-play) and 100% (maximal effort) bowling intensities (Table 2). Relative 202 ball velocity followed the similar trend across prescribed bowling intensities with CV of 6.6% 203 (5.8 - 7.7), 3.8% (3.4 - 4.4), 3.6% (3.2 - 4.2) and 2.6% (2.3 - 3.0) across the four prescribed 204 bowling intensities (Table 2). Measures of CV were shown to be higher when observing 205 absolute data (Table 3). Additionally, the peak PlayerLoadTM and resultant accelerometer data 206 207 had higher measures of CV in the 100% effort band when compared to the 85% effort band. 208

- 209 <<<< Insert Table 2 here >>>>
- 211 <<<< Insert Table 3 here >>>>
- 212

210

213

- Table 4 demonstrates that ball velocity had the best measure of within subject CV. Measures of within subject CV followed similar trends, with CV results reducing as intensity increased. The measures of within subject CV in Peak PlayerLoadTM were calculated as 11.2% (9.9 – 13.0), 8.0% (7.1 – 9.3), 7.4% (6.5 – 8.6) and 6.8% (6.0-7.8) across the prescribed intensities
- 218 (Table 4).
- 219
- 220 No bowler was required to re-bowl any balls due to no balls, wide deliveries or failure to bowl
- at the predetermined intensity.
- 222
- 223 <<<< Insert Table 4 here >>>>
- 224
- 225

- 226 Discussion
- 227

This study (1) examined the relationship between prescribed bowling effort, bowling velocity 228 229 and the outputs from a microtechnology device, and (2) ascertain whether the technology could provide a more refined measure of bowling workload and intensity compared the routine 230 231 method of counting balls bowled only. The results of this study demonstrate a good relationship 232 between prescribed bowling effort and both bowling velocity and PlayerLoadTM results. Data were reported as percentages relative to maximal efforts of individual fast bowlers, which 233 234 accounts for individual variations in technique and bowling velocities, and is easily processed 235 by cricket coaches. Practically, calibrating the percentage effort of each ball to a recent effort 236 within a significant competitive match provides both context and meaningful data for coaches 237 and support staff.

238

To date, the measurement of bowling workload in cricket literature and practice has been 239 240 limited to the simple method of bowling counts in training and competition.^{3,4,12} This presents a simple definition of total workload, but may not account for the variability and significance 241 242 of higher effort bowling from one training session/game to another. Intuitively, the intensity of individual bowling sessions will have a significant influence on the bowler's workload status, 243 244 and may have an influence on the physical status and fatigue of bowlers. As such, bowling intensity is likely to influence the preparation of fast bowlers for various levels of competition 245 or returning from injury.⁵ Fast bowlers returning from injury likely have to build up bowling 246 intensity and grouping lower intensity bowling may not reflect the match bowling in 247

248

249 The large variability in the microtechnology metrics at sub maximal intensities can be 250 explained by the greater scope for variability at lower or submaximal intensities (Table 2). 251 Importantly, the ball velocity, measured with a routinely used radar gun, also exhibited an 252 increased variability at lower intensities. We acknowledge that the microtechnology output exhibit greater variability than ball velocity and should be considered a limitation of the 253 254 technology. However, this may be explained by the ability of elite fast bowlers to find 255 efficiency in maintaining stable ball velocity across bowling intensities despite the likelihood of subtle changes in bowling technique at lower bowling velocities. Ball velocity was measured 256 as greater than 80% across all four intensities. This is likely explained by the fact that bowling 257 "effort" is not the only component contributing to ball velocity in elite fast bowlers. The 258 bowling technique of elite fast bowlers has a large influence on ball velocities,¹⁵ and despite 259 260 the aim of bowling at lower intensities, technically the bowlers were still able to maintain a 261 higher level of ball velocity. Given the bowlers in this study were elite performing fast bowlers 262 and only bowled two overs at high intensity, we believe that fatigue would have limited influence on the results of this study. 263

264

Within subject CV showed that ball velocity provided the most stable output. In addition, the within subject CV for ball velocity decreased as intensity increased. Absolute microtechnology outputs demonstrated greater variability than relative values, although absolute ball velocity had similar variability to relative ball velocity. This is explained by the fact that between the bowlers, each performed with slightly different actions impacting the microtechnology outputs. Based on this finding, we suggest that microtechnology outputs in cricket fast bowlers should be observed relative to the individual. Although this may be considered a limitation of microtechnology as an indication of bowling intensity, using microtechnology to record bowling workload and intensity provides a much more practical solution than the use of radar guns when applied across large populations of fast bowlers and over many training sessions and competitions.

276

Measures of roll and PlayerLoadTM provided the strongest relationships with both prescribed 277 278 intensity and ball velocity (Table 1). The gyroscope measure of roll represents the velocity of 279 lateral trunk flexion. As opposed to yaw (thoracic rotation velocity), lateral trunk flexion 280 velocity may be a more stable trait within the side-on, front-on or mixed bowling techniques 281 used amongst fast bowlers. Both the peak resultant and peak PlayerLoadTM variables rely on 282 the tri-axial accelerometers housed within the wearable unit. The resultant accelerometer 283 combines the raw outputs from all three accelerometer axes. Treating the raw accelerometer 284 data with a filter may be required to improve the relationship between prescribed intensities 285 and ball velocity.

286

287 This study did not include match-play data, and consequently we were unable to relate bowling 288 intensity to a pre-determined maximum competition output. Further research is required to 289 establish the validity and reliability of the microtechnology outputs during cricket match-play. Measuring bowling intensity may potentially provide a novel method of monitoring elite 290 291 cricket fast bowlers. The paucity in literature around bowling intensity and injury outcome can 292 largely be attributed to the difficulty in measuring fast bowling intensity. We propose that 293 microtechnology outputs may provide a practical method of monitoring bowling intensity in 294 fast bowlers.

295

296 A relationship between fast bowling workload and injury has been widely reported.^{1,3,4} More 297 specifically, researchers have demonstrated increased injury risk with both under- and overbowling³ while others have shown a delayed effect of increased injury risk after bouts of 298 increased acute bowling workload.^{1,4} Previous researchers have studied the relationship 299 300 between chronic (fitness) and acute (fatigue) bowling workloads and injury risk in cricket fast 301 bowlers.⁴ They identified that the injury likelihood of fast bowlers increased significantly in the week following a "spike" in acute workload relative to chronic workload.⁴ Systematic 302 increases in chronic bowling workloads decreased injury likelihood.⁴ With this in mind, the 303 findings presented in this study provide the scope for cricket researchers to establish measures 304 305 of fast bowling intensity and help generate chronic bowling workloads relative to the match-306 play demands of the individual fast bowler. It is likely that in some cases, chronic workloads have been inflated with the inclusion of balls bowled at lower intensities, which may be 307 308 misleading when identifying the preparedness of the bowler. Further research is required to 309 explore if excluding lower intensity balls influences the acute:chronic workload ratio in fast 310 bowlers.

311

Practically, there are many factors that play a role in prescribing bowling workloads to fastbowlers. These may include, but are not limited to; return from injury, competition restrictions,

- competition strategy, and playing conditions.¹⁶ To a degree, these factors can largely be 314 315 controlled. However, there are other factors that are much more difficult to account for when preparing fast bowlers, including; the time between bowling innings in multi-day cricket and, 316 the workload 'flow-on' effect amongst the bowlers within the team when one bowler sustains 317 318 an injury in a competitive match. With this in mind, controlling bowling workloads prior to 319 and after competition is vital in the preparation and management of fast bowlers from both a skill acquisition and injury prevention perspective. This integration of routinely used 320 monitoring systems such as microtechnology to provide specific and meaningful data for 321 coaches, rehabilitation and strength and conditioning staff in cricket would provide both a 322 323 novel and practical solution in monitoring bowling intensity.
- 324 325

326 **Practical Applications**

327 Outputs from the microtechnology unit worn by cricket fast bowlers provide good insight into 328 bowling intensity. The use of this technology provides a more practical method of measuring and recording bowling intensity than measuring ball velocity. This information provides a 329 330 method of improved overall workload monitoring, particularly where varying bowling intensities are performed by the bowler. The use of wearable microtechnology to determine 331 332 bowling intensity provides additional meaningful information apart from the routinely reported data outputs of GPS in cricket match-play and training. Additionally, this data provides 333 workload information for the coach from numerous players who may be competing or training 334 335 in various locations at any one time that to date has been difficult to objectively quantify. 336 Finally, implementing intensity into the current acute and chronic workload monitoring system may provide a clearer indication of the preparedness of the fast bowler to tolerate high 337 338 workloads.

339

340 Conclusions

In conclusion, we found a large to very large relationship between microtechnology outputs and both prescribed intensity and ball velocity. The large standard deviations at lower intensities can be explained by both the inability of the athlete to adhere to submaximal intensities and greater scope for variability at lower intensities. While further validation in varying competition and training settings is required, our findings demonstrate that microtechnology devices offer both a practical and adequate tool for prescribing and monitoring bowling intensity and workload in elite fast bowlers.

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Table 1. Relationship between bowling effort and microtechnology outputs.

r	8		
Prescribed Effort	D	Ball Velocity	D
Relationship	Λ	Relationship	K
Resultant max %	0.71 ± 0.28 Very Large	Resultant max %	0.64 ± 0.33 <i>Large</i>
PlayerLoad TM max %	0.83 ± 0.19 Very Large	PlayerLoad max %	0.82 ± 0.20 Very Large
Roll max %	0.80 ± 0.21 Very Large	Roll max %	0.73 ± 0.27 Very Large
Yaw max %	0.56 ± 0.37 Large	Yaw max %	$0.58 \pm 0.36 \ Large$

Polynomial regression \pm 90% confidence intervals and descriptor.

407

		Bowling Intensity %			
Variable		60%	70%	85%	100%
Deals D all 0/	Mean	64.4%	74.9%	88.0%	93.2%
Peak Roll %	CV (%)	16.0 (14.0 - 18.0)	11.0 (10.0 - 13.0)	11.0 (9.3.0 - 12.0)	6.1 (5.4 - 7.1)
Peak Accelerometer	Mean	57.0%	72.2%	81.0%	86.4%
resultant %	CV (%)	21.0 (19.0 - 24.0)	17.0 (15.0 - 19.0)	12.0 (10.0 - 13.0)	12.0 (10.0 - 13.0)
Deals Disservice and TM 0/	Mean	56.7%	68.8%	81.4%	92.1%
Peak PlayerLoad TM %	CV (%)	19.0 (17.0 - 23.0)	14.0 (12.0 - 16.0)	9.6 (8.4 - 11.0)	7.3 (6.4 - 8.5)
$\mathbf{D}_{1} = 1_{1} \mathbf{V}_{2} = 0$	Mean	72.8%	82.6%	91.2%	93.3%
Peak Yaw %	CV (%)	22.0 (19.0 - 26.0)	16.0 (14.0 - 18.0)	10.0 (9.1 – 12.0)	8.4 (7.4 - 9.7)
D-1-(' D-11 V-1' 0/	Mean	81.9%	89.2%	93.5%	97.2%
Relative Ball Velocity %	CV (%)	6.6 (5.8 - 7.7)	3.8 (3.4 - 4.4)	3.6 (3.2 - 4.2)	2.6 (2.3 – 3.0)

Table 2. Mean and coefficient of variation for *relative data* across prescribed bowling intensities.

Coefficient of variation (CV%) and 90% confidence interval.

		Bowling Intensity %			
Variable		60%	70% 85%		100%
Deals Dell (dea/age)	Mean	764.83	890.3	1042.6	1090.5
Peak Roll (deg/sec)	CV (%)	29.7 (26.0 - 34.0)	27.3 (24.0 - 32.0)	27.6 (24.0 - 32.0)	23.8 (21.0 - 28.0)
Peak Accelerometer	Mean	8.8	11.1	12.4	13.3
resultant (g)	CV (%)	28.4 (25.0 - 33.0)	22.8 (20.0 - 27.0)	16.0 (14.0 - 19.0)	19.2 (17.0 - 22.0)
	Mean	4.0	4.9	5.7	6.5
Peak PlayerLoad TM (AU)	CV (%)	24.4 (22.0 - 28.0)	18.1 (16.0 – 21.0)	14.7 (13.0 - 17.0)	17.8 (16.0 - 21.0)
$\mathbf{D}_{\mathbf{r}} = 1_{\mathbf{r}} \mathbf{V}_{\mathbf{r}} = \mathbf{r} \left(1_{\mathbf{r}} + \mathbf{r} \right)$	Mean	933.0	1055.7	1169.8	1196.4
Peak Yaw (deg/sec)	CV (%)	27.1 (27.0 - 31.0)	21.1 (19.0 - 24.0)	17.9 (16.0 – 21.0)	16.6 (15.0 - 19.0)
Dall Valacity (long/h)	Mean	100.7	109.6	115.0	119.7
Ball Velocity (km/h)	CV (%)	7.9 (6.9 – 9.1)	4.0 (3.5 – 4.6)	4.0 (3.5 – 4.7)	4.3 (3.8 – 5.0)

Table 3. Mean and coefficient of variation for *absolute data* across prescribed bowling intensities.

Coefficient of variation (CV%) and 90% confidence interval.

		Bowling Intensity %			
Variable		60%	70%	85%	100%
Peak Roll (deg/sec)	CV (%)	7.6 (6.7 – 8.8)	6.1 (5.3 – 7.0)	6.9 (6.1 - 8.0)	5.9 (5.2 - 6.9)
Peak Accelerometer resultant (g)	CV (%)	15.3 (13.0 – 18.0)	10.4 (9.1 – 12.0)	9.4 (8.3 – 11.0)	10.5 (9.3 – 12.0)
Peak PlayerLoad TM (AU)	CV (%)	11.2 (9.9 – 13.0)	8.0 (7.1 – 9.3)	7.4 (6.5 – 8.6)	6.8(6.0 - 7.8)
Peak Yaw (deg/sec)	CV (%)	9.6 (8.4 – 11.0)	7.6 (6.7 – 8.9)	8.0 (7.0 – 9.2)	6.2 (5.4 – 7.1)
Ball Velocity (km/h)	CV (%)	3.8 (3.3 – 4.4)	2.6 (2.3 – 3.0)	2.8 (2.5 – 3.2)	2.5 (2.2 - 2.9)

Table 4. Within subject coefficient of variation across prescribed bowling intensities.

Coefficient of variation (CV%) and 90% confidence interval.

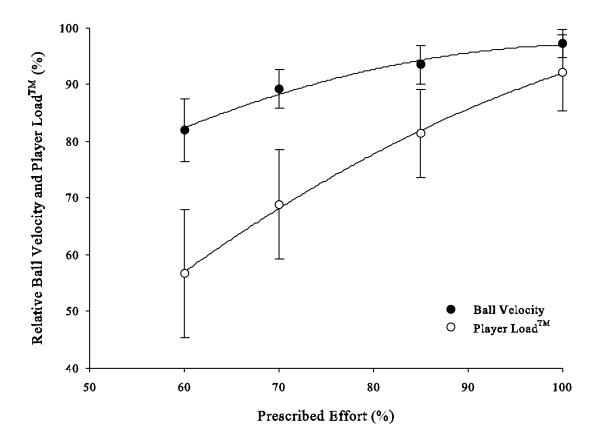


Figure 1. Mean ± Standard Deviation of Relative Ball Velocity and Relative PlayerLoadTM vs. Prescribed Effort.