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Inter-day reliability and usefulness of reactive strength index derived from two maximal rebound jump tests

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Keywords:	performance testing, strength and conditioning, strength testing, stretch-shortening cycle, plyometrics

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Inter-day reliability and usefulness of reactive strength index derived from two maximal rebound jump tests.

Submission type: Original Investigation

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Abstract

Purpose: This investigation examined the inter-day reliability and usefulness of reactive strength index (RSI) derived from a maximal 5 rebound jump test (5_{\max} RJT) and a maximal 10 rebound jump test (10/5 RJT). **Methods:** Twenty male field sport athletes (24.5 ± 3.0 y; 1.78 ± 0.1 m; 84.9 ± 5.2 kg) performed 2 maximal repetitions of the 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT on two testing days following a specific warm up. A one week period separated each testing day and these sessions were preceded by a familiarisation session. RSI was calculated by dividing jump height (m) by contact time (s). The 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT trial with the highest RSI on each testing day was used for reliability and usefulness analysis. **Results:** Both tests were deemed reliable for determining RSI for male, female and pooled male and female cohorts as the ICCs ≥ 0.80 and the CV $\leq 10\%$. Only the 5_{\max} RJT was rated as 'good' at detecting the smallest worthwhile change (SWC) in performance for female athletes (SWC: $0.10 > TE:0.07$). The 5_{\max} RJT for males and the 10/5 RJT for males and females were rated as 'good' in detecting a moderate change in performance only. **Conclusions:** Both tests are reliable for the determination of RSI but the usefulness of the tests in detecting the SWC is questionable.

Keywords: performance testing, strength and conditioning, strength testing, stretch-shortening cycle, plyometrics

Introduction

Sport demands individuals to acquire and execute a vast repertoire of movement skills. A fundamental requirement to safe and efficient execution of these movement skills is the identification, development and assessment of specific strength (dynamic, isometric, reactive) qualities.¹ Reactive strength evaluates the athlete's ability to efficiently brake and absorb (eccentric) forces within specific time frames, before subsequently generating a propulsive (concentric) force.² This has also been recognized as an individual's stretch load tolerance.³ Since these qualities represent the efficiency of an athlete's stretch-shortening cycle (SSC) capabilities, testing and monitoring this strength quality has been of significant interest to researchers and practitioners for some time.³

Self-regulated repetitive vertical hopping or continuous rebound jump tests provide a simple and controlled way to evaluate neuromuscular properties and muscle-tendon unit mechanics fundamental to fast-SSC (ground contact times (GCT); ≤ 0.25 s) performance.⁴ The reactive strength index (RSI) is frequently used to provide an indicator of fast-SSC capabilities.⁵ However, despite being extensively used to evaluate drop jump performance, there is limited research that has used RSI during continuous maximal rebound jumps⁶⁻¹², with only two studies to date examining the reliability of these measures.^{13,14}

Lloyd, et al.¹⁴ examined the within and between session reliability of a maximal 5-rebound jump (5_{\max} RJT) protocol in male youths and found that despite RSI having acceptable levels of test-retest reliability, the trial to trial variation (measurement error) in RSI scores was less reliable (coefficient of variation (CV): 11–21%) making it difficult to detect small but meaningful changes in RSI performance. It was suggested that the large CV could be attributed to variations in GCT, arising from an inability to control loading forces during repeated ground interactions. Moresi, et al.¹⁵ has shown that through a process of data reduction 'atypical' scores in rebound jump can be excluded ensuring reliable trial-to-trial variation (CV $\leq 10\%$) even for youth and less experienced individuals. Using a maximal 10 rebound jump protocol (10/5 RJT), Harper, et al.¹³ found that by removing the 5 lowest RSI scores across the 10 rebound jumps a CV of less than 10% could be obtained. Despite this, the usefulness of the 10/5 RJT test for detecting the smallest worthwhile change (SWC) was not evaluated.

Given the potential for rebound RSI jump performance to monitor changes in ankle joint stiffness particularly in the eccentric phase¹⁶, the capacity to sustain high eccentric muscle activity or reactive strength^{6,7}, mechanical efficiency in runners¹⁷ and ankle joint kinetics associated with maximal velocity sprint running⁸, it is of significant interest to practitioners to establish and compare both noise (CV) and signal (SWC) in order to allow inferences to be made on the true magnitude of individual changes in reactive strength performance.¹⁸ Therefore, the aim of this study was to establish and compare the inter-day reliability and usefulness of the 5_{\max} RJT and 10/5 RJT test for detecting practically small but important changes in RSI in both male and female team sport athletes.

Methods

Participants

Twenty male (mean \pm SD, 24.5 \pm 3.0 y; 1.78 \pm 0.1 m; 84.9 \pm 5.2 kg) and fifteen females (mean \pm SD, 21.1 \pm 0.9 y; 1.65 \pm 0.73 m; 62.0 \pm 5.1 kg) from Gaelic games took part in this study. The male participants were elite level inter-county Hurling players and the females played Gaelic Football at a collegiate level. All had at least 6 months of resistance training experience and were familiar with bilateral vertical hopping and fast-SSC training. Prior to participation, subjects read and signed an informed consent and completed the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q). All subjects answered 'No' to all questions on the PAR-Q. Approval for the study design was obtained prior to the commencement of the study from the University Institution Ethical Review Board, and all procedures were in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Study Design

A cross-sectional study design with repeated measures was used. All participants took part in two testing sessions where two trials of both the 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT were completed on each testing day to assess inter-day RSI reliability. Prior to these testing sessions the participants completed a familiarisation session. The three testing days were separated by a one week period.

Methodology

All of the three sessions took place on the same day of the week and at the same time of the day to control for circadian variation.¹⁹ Both the familiarisation and the two testing sessions followed the same format. The sessions began with a warm up consisting of 5 minutes of low intensity jogging and lower limb dynamic stretches. Following this, the participants performed 2 sets of 5 double leg ankle jumps and were given 2 minutes of seated rest before the commencement of the jump testing.

Once the warm-up was complete, the participants completed 2 trials of the 5_{\max} RJT followed by 2 trials of the 10/5 RJT. There was 60 s rest between each trial¹³ and 2 minutes between each jump type. For both jump protocols, participants were instructed to keep hands on hips to avoid upper-body interference²⁰, jump and land on the same spot, land with legs extended and then flex them and to look ahead at a fixed point at all times. The participants were also asked to maximise jump height and minimize ground contact time.¹⁴ Specifically they were instructed to '*imagine the ground is a hot surface, jump as high as possible and to imagine their leg is like a stiff spring rebounding off the ground*'.⁵ The 5_{\max} RJT involved the participants completing a countermovement jump followed by 4 maximal rebound jumps. The RSI value was calculated for each of the maximal rebound jumps by dividing jump height by ground contact time.³ The height jumped was defined as the flight time component and it was determined using the equation $HJ = (9.81 \times FT^2)/8$ from Bosco, et al..²¹ The average RSI of the 4 rebound jumps was subsequently determined to reflect the overall RSI value for this trial (5_{\max} RJT-RSI) and the trial with the highest RSI value was used for subsequent analysis. The 10/5 RJT involved the participants performing a countermovement jump followed by 10 maximal rebound jumps. RSI for each jump was calculated as described previously and the average of the 5 best RSI scores with GCT less than 0.25s was used to determine an overall RSI value for

125 this trial (10/5 RJT-RSI).¹³ Again the trial with the best RSI score was used for
126 statistical analysis.

127

128 All 5_{\max} RJT and 10/5 RJT trials were measured using the Optojump™
129 (Microgate, Bolzano, Italy) system. The Optojump™ consists of two parallel bars
130 connected to a personal computer with one bar acting as a transmitter unit containing
131 96 light emitting diodes positioned 0.003 m above the ground and the other bar acting
132 as a receiver unit.²² When a participant performs a rebound jump within the parallel
133 bar configuration the light is interrupted by the participant's foot during the jump,
134 which triggers the timer in the unit and records with a precision of 1 ms.²² The total
135 time that the light is interrupted is a measure of contact time and the total time
136 between interruptions is a measure of flight time.²² This system has been reported as a
137 valid measurement of RSI.²²

138

139 **Statistical Analyses**

140 The trial with the highest RSI score for both jump protocols on each testing
141 day was used for inter-day reliability analysis, which was performed for the entire
142 group and males and females separately. Assumption of normality for all data was
143 confirmed using the Shapiro-Wilk statistic. Reliability was calculated by determining
144 the coefficient of variation (calculated as the typical error and expressed as a CV) and
145 the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) with 95% confidence intervals (95% CI)
146 using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.²³ Acceptable reliability was determined at an
147 $ICC \geq 0.8$ and a $CV \leq 10\%$.²³

148

149 Usefulness was determined by comparing typical error (TE) to the SWC using
150 a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.²³ The SWC was calculated by multiplying the
151 between-subject SD by 0.2 ($SWC_{0.2}$), which represents a typical small effect and by
152 0.5 ($SWC_{0.5}$) which is an alternate moderate effect. In line with recommendations
153 from Hopkins ²⁴, the test was rated as 'good' if the TE was below the SWC, as 'ok' if
154 the TE was similar to the SWC and as 'marginal' in detecting meaningful change if
155 the TE was higher than the SWC.

156

157

157 **Results**

158

159 Male and female highest (mean \pm SD) RSI scores for both RJT protocols for
160 day one and day two are shown in Table 1. In Table 2 the results pertaining to the
161 ICC, CV, TE, $SWC_{0.2}$ and $SWC_{0.5}$ are detailed. Figure 1 shows how the various
162 cohorts meet the ICC criteria of ≥ 0.8 . Similarly figure 2 illustrates how these cohorts
163 satisfied the CV criteria of $\leq 10\%$.

164

165 The results pertaining to the usefulness of the 10/5 RJT and the 5_{\max} RJT are
166 detailed in Table 2. Only the 5_{\max} RJT in females was shown to be able to detect a
167 'small' worthwhile change in RSI. Both the 10/5 RJT and 5_{\max} RJT was rated as
168 'good' for detecting a 'moderate' change in RSI.

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170

171

171 **Discussion**

172

173 Both the 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT can be deemed as reliable tests of fast-SSC
174 reactive strength index for male, female and pooled groups of male and female field

175 sport athletes. With respect to the reliability of RSI measurement, both tests
176 demonstrated a CV of less than 10% in each cohort and an ICC of ≥ 0.8 .

177

178 Despite being a reliable test, the results of this study call into question the usefulness
179 of the 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT for this particular cohort of field sport athletes. The
180 10/5 RJT had a typical error of 0.10-0.14 units for the measurement of RSI which is
181 greater than the SWC for these male, female and pooled cohorts which ranged from
182 0.06-0.09 units. Thus, the efficacy of this test to detect the SWC is deemed to be
183 marginal.

184

185 The 5_{\max} RJT had a lower typical error of 0.07-0.10 units for the measurement of RSI.
186 The SWC for these male, female and pooled cohorts ranged from 0.08-0.10 units. The
187 5_{\max} RJT demonstrated a good ability to detect the SWC in RSI in female athletes
188 only. In the male cohort and the pooled cohort the efficacy of the test to detect the
189 SWC was deemed to be marginal. Both tests were rated as “good” in terms of
190 detecting moderate changes in reactive strength (0.5 effect size).

191

192 These results cast doubt as to the usefulness of the 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT as a
193 daily or weekly monitoring tool due to its potential inability to detect the SWC.
194 Weekly monitoring needs to be sensitive to small changes in physical condition in
195 order to afford coaches the opportunity to manage training loads and optimise
196 preparedness. However, the usefulness of any test may be dependent on the subject
197 cohort’s familiarity with the testing protocol. It could be expected that typical error of
198 testing will reduce as subjects become more familiar (and more habituated) to a
199 testing protocol.

200

201 In this cohort of subjects, the 10/5 RJT exhibited CVs of 7-10% and the 5_{\max} RJT
202 demonstrated CV of 7-8%. These are similar CVs as has previously been reported for
203 reactive strength measurement by Beattie and Flanagan²⁵ who observed CV of 8.5%
204 for the drop jump from 40cm (DJ-40) using a contact mat. In agreement with the
205 current study, Beattie and Flanagan²⁵ also observed that the DJ-40 reactive strength
206 test was unable to detect the SWC. The observed CV was greater than the calculated
207 SWC. However, other studies have observed much lower CV for reactive strength
208 index in the drop jump. Markwick, et al.²⁶ observed RSI CVs of 2.1 – 3.1% for
209 basketball players in the drop jump across heights ranging from 20-50cm.

210

211 These conflicting results demonstrate that the “reliability” or usefulness of reactive
212 strength testing may be population specific. For example, the population in the study
213 by Markwick, et al.²⁶ were professional basketball players. A reasonable expectation
214 can be made that these subjects would have greater fast-SSC training experience than
215 the current cohort of amateur field sport athletes. Although both studies utilized
216 different reactive strength testing modalities, it is worth noting that the subjects
217 utilized by Markwick, et al.²⁶ demonstrated greater reactive strength ability than the
218 subjects in the current study. The male professional basketball players in the study by
219 Markwick et al.²⁶ exhibited a mean RSI of 2.1 units compared to a mean RSI of 1.5 –
220 1.6 units for males in the current study and a mean of 1.8 units for junior rugby
221 players in the work of Beattie and Flanagan.²⁵

222

223

224 It has also been demonstrated that there can be large variation in reliability between
225 athletes within the same cohort and it has been recommended that individualised CV
226 should be calculated to assess “meaningful change” on an athlete-by-athlete basis.²⁵
227 By comparing the change in performance (the signal) relative to the test’s inter-day
228 CV value (the noise), practitioners can begin to make decisions about the
229 ‘meaningfulness of change’ in that variable and make an objective judgement on the
230 changes in physical preparedness ²⁷. If the change in an athlete’s RSI is outside their
231 individualised CV for the test (i.e. the signal \geq noise), then coaches can be confident
232 that the change is a ‘worthwhile’ increase or decrease in reactive strength ²⁴.

233

234 With more experienced athletes or with greater exposure to the testing protocol, it is
235 possible that the “usefulness” of the test may improve. However, this study highlights
236 that for male and female amateur field sport athletes the current protocols, apart from
237 the 5_{\max} RJT for females, are not enough to derive “useful” data and may not be able
238 to detect the SWC.

239

240

Practical Applications

241

242 Both the 10/5 RJT and 5_{\max} RJT demonstrated good inter-day reliability and thus have
243 potential to be used as a measure of an athlete’s fast-SSC capabilities. In addition,
244 identifying small meaningful changes in RSI is of significant interest to practitioners.
245 **The dataset is limited in this study as** only the 5_{\max} RJT for females demonstrated an
246 ability to detect SWC **for this population group**. Practitioners should calculate their
247 own bespoke SWC / TE data to assess the usefulness of the test for their own
248 population. **Finally**, this study does provide practitioners with examples of typical
249 error for both the 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT. The 10/5 RJT had a typical error of 0.10
250 – 0.14 units and the 5_{\max} RJT had a typical error of 0.07 – 0.10 units for the
251 measurement of reactive strength index. **These TE examples, however, may be**
252 **specific to the population group in question.**

253

254

Conclusions

255

256 Both the 5_{\max} RJT and the 10/5 RJT are reliable tests of fast-SSC reactive strength
257 capabilities for male, female and combined male and female groups of field sport
258 athletes. However, this study casts some doubt on the ability of these tests to detect
259 the SWC in reactive strength in field sport athletes. The tests do have the potential to
260 detect a moderate change in reactive strength within this cohort.

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340 Figure Captions

341

342

343 **Figure 1.** ICCs \pm 95% CI for both jump protocols for males, females and males and
344 females combined. Grey shaded area = zone of acceptable reliability (ICC \geq 0.8).

345

346

347 **Figure 2.** CVs \pm 95% CI for both jump protocols for males, females and males and
348 females combined. Grey shaded area = zone of acceptable reliability (CV% \leq 10%).

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For Peer Review

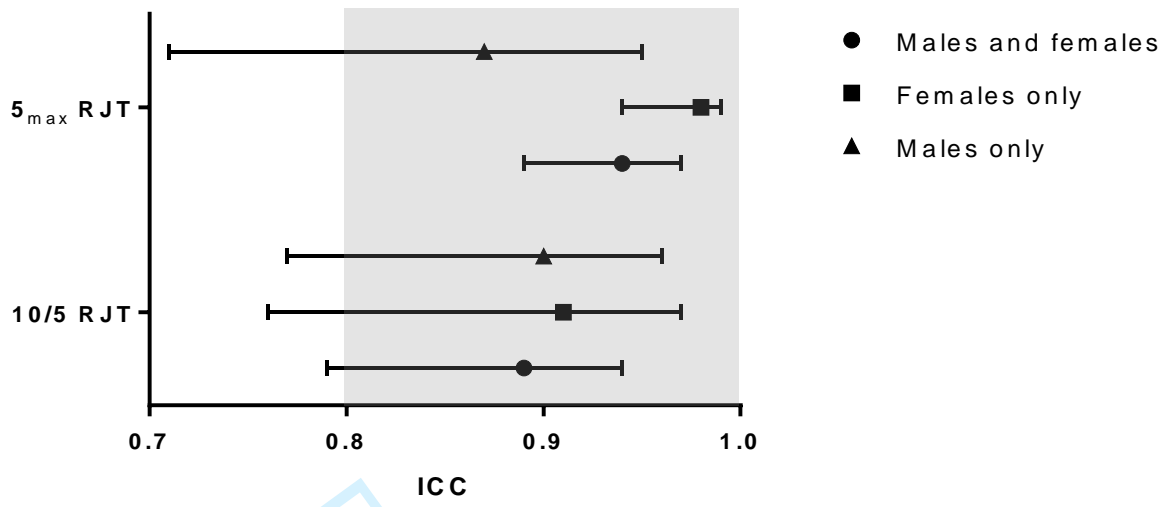


Figure 1.

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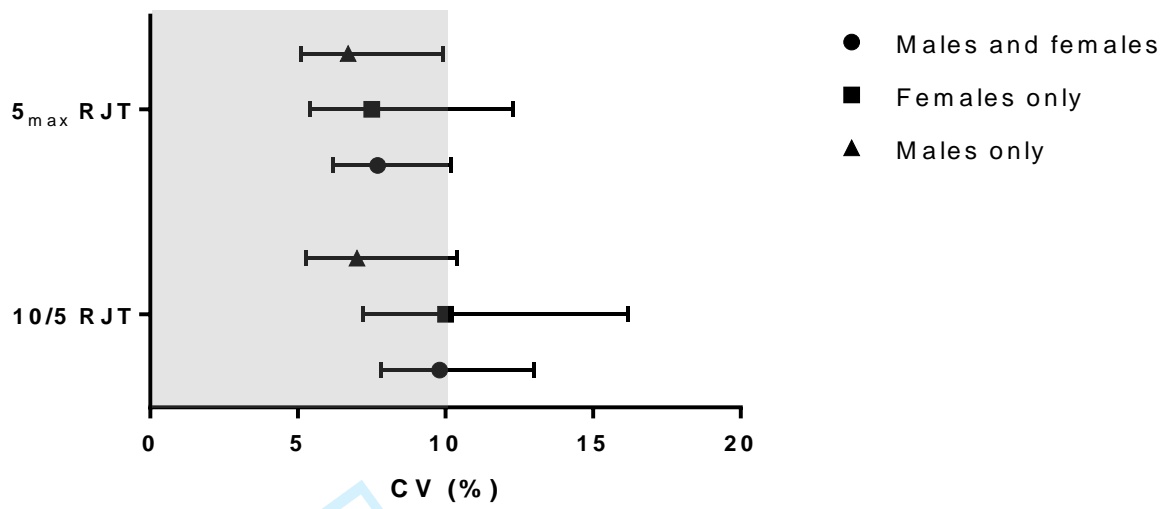


Figure 2.

Table 1. Highest RSI (mean \pm SD) for males and females for testing day one and two for both the 10/5 RJT and the 5_{\max} RJT

Participants	5_{\max} RJT-RSI Day One	5_{\max} RJT-RSI Day Two	10/5 RJT-RSI Day One	10/5 RJT-RSI Day Two
Males and Females	1.39 \pm 0.39	1.43 \pm 0.43	1.38 \pm 0.40	1.40 \pm 0.38
Males Only	1.52 \pm 0.26	1.61 \pm 0.29	1.48 \pm 0.31	1.59 \pm 0.29
Females Only	1.23 \pm 0.48	1.18 \pm 0.46	1.22 \pm 0.47	1.20 \pm 0.38

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For Peer Review

Table 2. Reliability and usefulness of RSI derived from the 10/5 RJT and 5_{max} RJT for males, females, and males and females combined.

Variable	ICC	Lower 95% CI	Higher 95% CI	CV%	Lower 95% CI	Higher 95% CI	TE	SWC (0.2)	Rating	SWC (0.5)	Rating
10/5 RJT-RSI, males and females	0.89	0.79	0.94	9.8	7.8	13.0	0.13	0.08	Marginal	0.19	Good
10/5 RJT-RSI, females	0.91	0.76	0.97	10.0	7.2	16.2	0.14	0.09	Marginal	0.21	Good
10/5 RJT-RSI, males	0.90	0.77	0.96	7.0	5.3	10.4	0.10	0.06	Marginal	0.14	Good
5 _{max} RJT-RSI, males and females	0.94	0.89	0.97	7.7	6.2	10.2	0.10	0.08	Marginal	0.20	Good
5 _{max} RJT-RSI, females	0.98	0.94	0.99	7.5	5.4	12.3	0.07	0.10	Good	0.24	Good
5 _{max} RJT-RSI, males	0.87	0.71	0.95	6.7	5.1	9.9	0.10	0.06	Marginal	0.14	Good