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Selection and training philosophies adopted by regional football U17 boys teams during 54th KVS national meet, 2025 – An opinion poll

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Abstract

The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) conducts an extensive sports meet for various sports disciplines each academic year concluding with a KVS level national meet. It serves as budding platform for higher order nationals as well as international school games. Citing this importance, this study aimed to shed light on the selection and preparation philosophies adopted during one of the prominent sports disciplines, the U17 Football Boys, at the 54th KVS National Meet 2025, as it requires deliberation of building a mixed team from all the KV schools within a region.

A qualitative analysis was carried out to collect the data through a google form and after careful study of responses 8 out of all the entries were included for analysis. Findings revealed a pragmatic guiding philosophy amongst the coaches/selectors, which is driven by the non-standard environment, short preparatory periods and players coming from different schools. Further, 87.5% of regions reported technical passing as their predominant style and 75% prioritized selecting individually talented players over a cohesive group. Technical skills was voted as top priority for player selection, followed by mental toughness and X-factor. Limited exposure to competitive matches is perceived as the most urgent challenge faced according to 62.5% regions. Citing the time constraint the ranking exercise revealed playing practice matches to be of highest priorities during preparatory camps. While individual skill development is of lowest concern. Additionally, upon zonal comparison, distinct regional choices were pronounced. In conclusion, the pragmatic approach of the coaches/selectors is a necessary means due to unique challenges and limited time frame available to prepare. The findings may serve as a needs analysis for KVS sports administrators and indirectly contributing to future player development. Empirical studies are further suggested based on the findings; also similar studies can be planned for other prominent sports disciplines.

Keywords: Technical Ability, Tactical Versatility, Innate Style of Play, Sports Culture.

Introduction

Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) is a premier school organization, an autonomous body under the ministry of education (MoE), Govt. of India (GOI). It conducts its own extensive and multilevel (cluster, regional, and national levels and under-14, 17, & 19 categories) sports competitions every academic year. The vision is to provide its 13+ lakh students in 1287 schools divided across 25 regions throughout the country with opportunities to systematically train, participate and excel in 22 sports categories (for the academic year 2025-26 ^[1]).

Furthermore, from the national level KVS meet, the individuals and teams are selected to represent KVS as a state, for participation in the School Games Federation of India (SGFI) National Meet ^[2, 3]. SGFI is a recognized body that conducts national and international level school games in India and ultimately selects students for representing the nation on the international stage ^[4].

Hence, the structure of KVS sports meet potentially serves as a huge platform for many students and coaches to test their sporting endeavors and translates itself into an opportunity of talent identification and development for various games and sports of national interest.

Citing this scope, it is important to analyze how different KVS regions select and prepare their athletes for the competition. There must be numerous unique challenges faced by the regions due to socio-economic structure, geographical, administrative differences, as well as predominant sports culture in their respective areas ^[5].

One would need a guiding force that would ensure consistency in making complex decisions such as player selection and preparation. Thus, an enquiry of philosophies adopted for selection and preparation of the team becomes crucial to better understand team performances and future improvements [6]. Initial investigation revealed that very limited studies shed any light on the matter. Therefore, this study was focused on comprehending how KVS regional teams are prepared for such a potent sporting platform.

Delimitations of the Study

1. Each sport discipline has its own specialization [7], thus based on expert opinion and researcher's experience the study was delimited to Football (Boys) teams of KVS regions. 2. The study was further delimited to U17 Football (Boys) teams of KVS regions, since in KVS nationals, only U17 category teams are composed by combining players from different schools of the region [8].

Materials and Methods

The study was conceptualized to be a qualitative analysis to gather information about selection and training philosophies

adopted by the different KVS Regional Teams who participated in 54th KVS Nationals Sports Meet for U17 Football (Boys), thus gaining a comprehensive description of the process.

Instrument Used

An online opinion poll was taken through a curated Google Form. It was circulated to the Chief Coaches/Assistant Coaches/Selectors/Escorts of all 24 participating regions in the 54th KVS Nationals Sports Meet with the permission of the competent authority. Items in the poll were carefully selected based on [9, 10, 11]. To discourage spontaneous answering, ranking exercise was included where options were randomly ordered, each time the form was opened and further restriction on giving same ranks to more than one option was imposed to force deliberation on the part of the participant. The form was divided into 3 specific parts namely, Regional Context and Player Profiling, Strategy and Selection Priorities, Preparatory Camp Priorities and Final Reflection for the Future. Content was selected with scholarly references and justifications (Table 1):

Table 1: Justifications of sections and queries included in the google form for opinion poll.

Section	About	Primary Questions	Justification
1	Regional Context and Player Profiling	a. Predominant style of football in your region? b. Which philosophy has always worked? c. Regional challenges (Ranking exercise)	The region specific football culture and environment has an effect on player development and innate style of play [9]
2	Strategy and Selection Priorities	a. Given the limited time to gel as a unit, what do you prioritize? b. As per the tournament format, which selection factor becomes more critical? c. Player attributes (Ranking Exercise)	Selection Strategy must adapt to the limitation of time available to mold players into a unit. Due to very short preparatory periods training implications also change for desired performance levels [10].
3.	Preparatory Camp Priorities	a. Priorities of what must be absolutely achieved, within the limited time. (Ranking Exercise)	Precise training modules in accordance to selected player profiles must be executed to achieve best possible form [10, 11].

Results

Out of all the responses 8 submissions were completely filled and were found fit for analysis. The 8 regions were namely, Kolkata (from East); Ahmadabad (from West); Jammu and Dehradun (from North); Hyderabad and Ernakulam (from South); and Silchar and Guwahati regions (from Northeast) respectively. 50% of the responses were made by the Chief Coach of the region, 25% was submitted by Assistant Coaches, and 25% was submitted by Escort teachers. 1% of the respondents had an experience of 15 years working in KVS. Analysis of Regional Context and Player Profile showed 87.5% of the regions had a predominant style (Fig 1) of technical passing with emphasis on possession, short passes, and intricate play, while 12.5% preferred Physical/Direct play, focusing on strength speed and long balls.

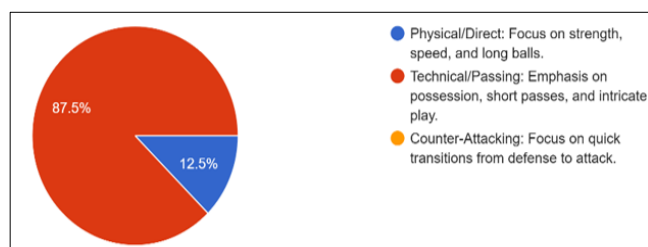


Fig 1: Predominant style of football in your region?

Further, the analysis about what worked for the region (Fig 2) in the past participations showed 37.5% trust on the attribute of strong defensive organization while 25% each believed on aggressive attacking play and superior fitness & stamina to be working for them and finally 12.5% believed to be leadership and team spirit as the main driving force behind past successes.

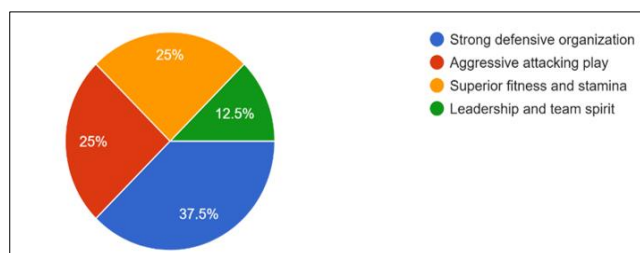


Fig 2: What has always worked for your region's progress further in the tournament?

When it came to most urgent matter that needs to be addressed (Fig 3), 62.5% respondents chose limited exposure to competitive matches to be the most urgent while 50% agreed upon lack of specialized coaching staff (such as goalkeeper coach, fitness trainers etc.) as the second most urgent need, and team coordination between students coming together from different schools was least concerning to the majority of the respondents.

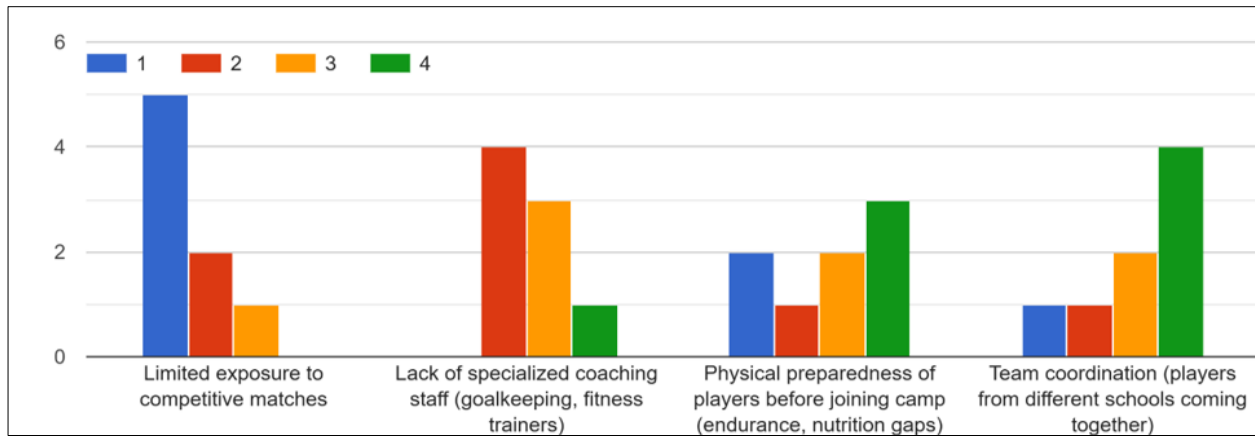


Fig 3: Ranking Exercise for Most Urgent Regional Challenge.

Analysis of Strategy and Selection Priorities (Fig 4) revealed 75% chose to select individually talented players who can change the game due to the limited time available to gel as a unit while 25% chose to select a cohesive group of players from one or two vidyalayas who already understand each other.

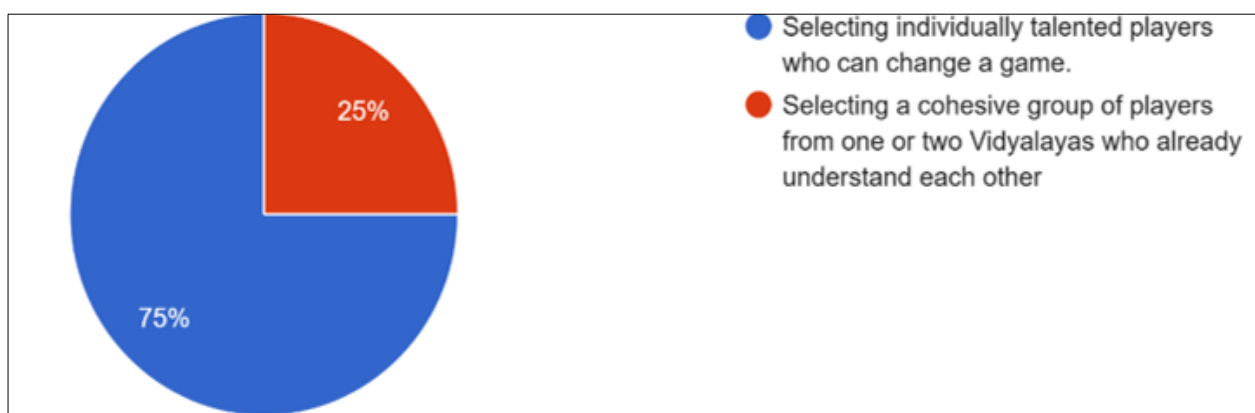


Fig 4: Given the limited time to gel as a unit, what do you prioritize?

While when asked, *which selection factor becomes more critical as per the tournament format*, (Fig 5) 62.5% agreed on tactical versatility while 25% chose depth in squad rotation and remaining 12.5 preferred defensive solidity as a critical factor.

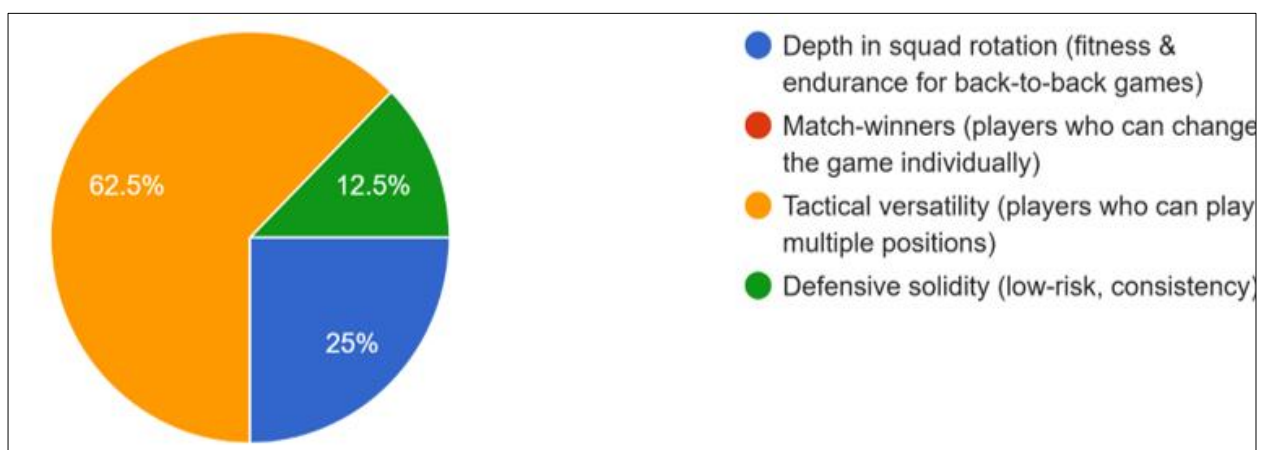


Fig 5: As per the tournament format, which selection factor becomes more critical?

Voted rankings of factors related to player selection (Fig 6) revealed technical skills to be of first priority followed by Mental toughness and X-factor tied on second while tactical intelligence was voted as third and coachability as fifth, thereafter leadership and consistency tied at sixth while versatility and team chemistry was heavily voted towards the trailing end of the rankings.

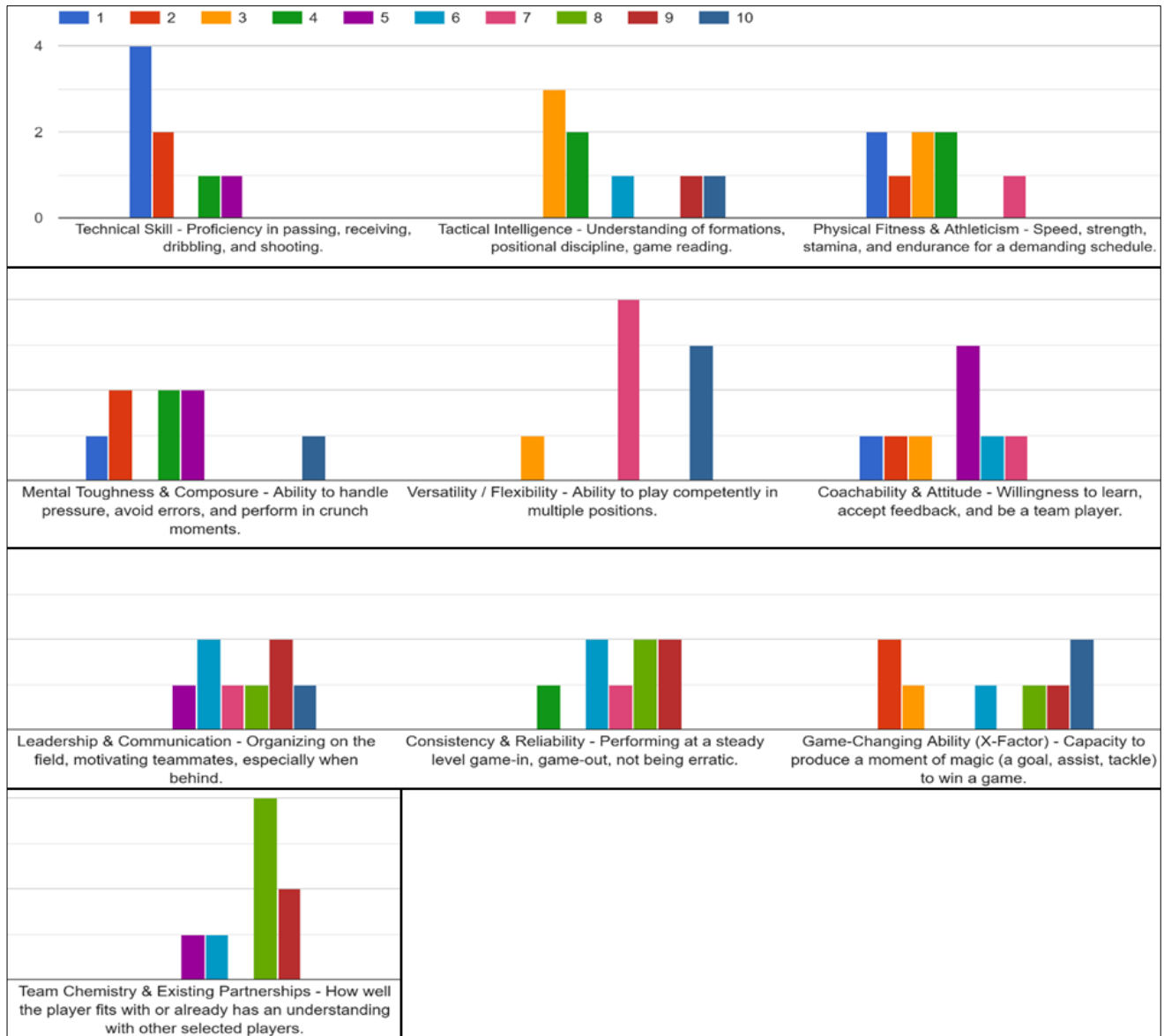
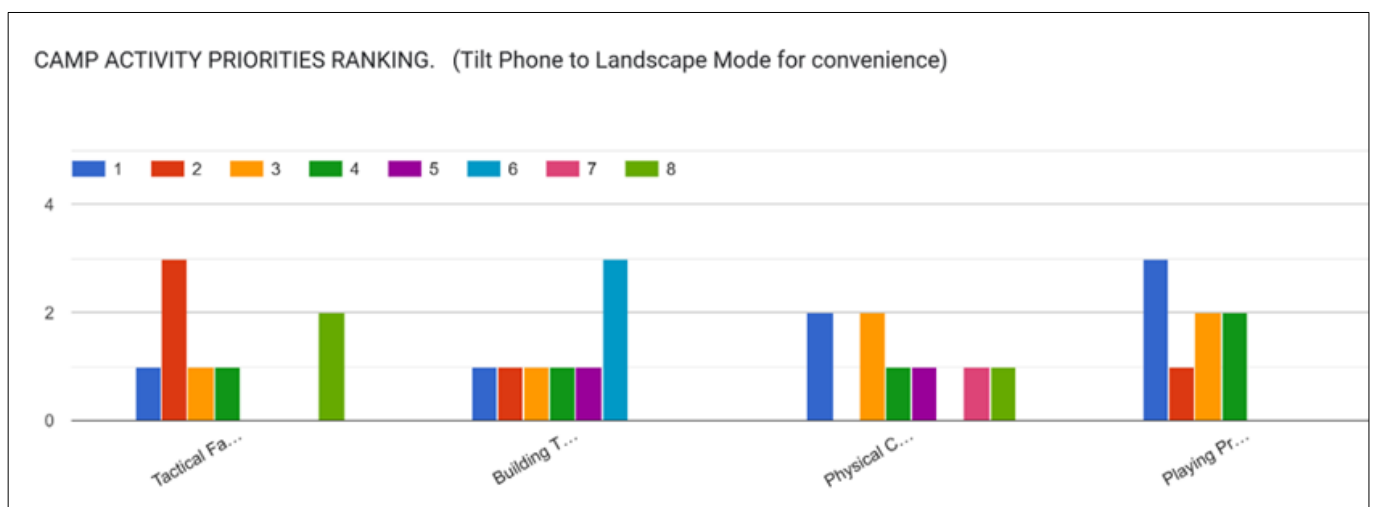


Fig 6: Ranking Exercise for priority to factors related to player selection

Ranking exercise on priorities for activities in preparatory camp (Fig 7) showed highest priority towards playing practice matches followed by developing tactical familiarization, recovery being prioritized on fifth position while individual skill development was the last concern for most of the respondents.



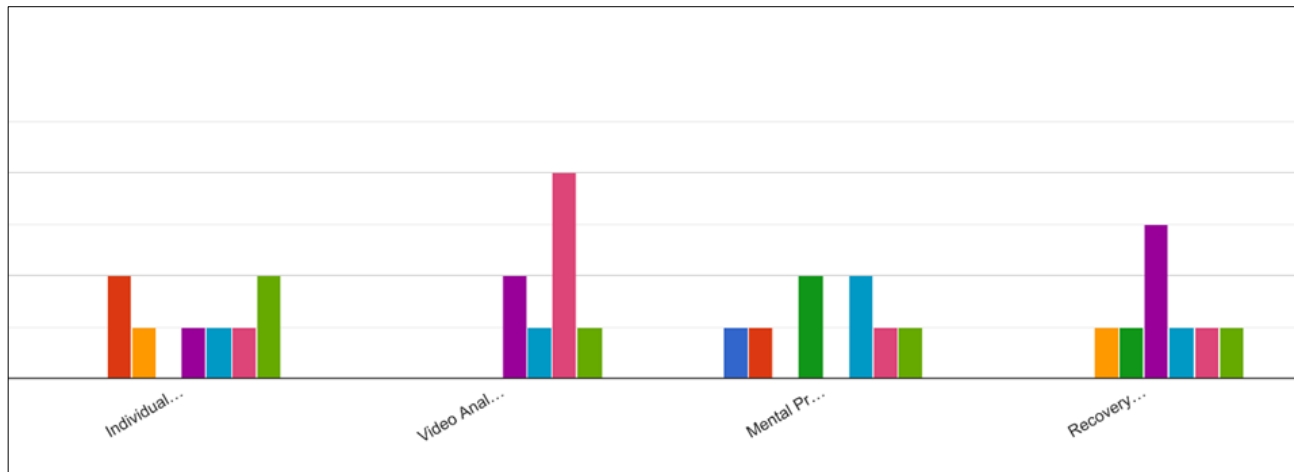


Fig 7: Ranking Exercise for priority of activities in the preparatory camp

And finally, suggestion on most urgently needed improvement (Fig 8) for better nationals performances in the future, 50% pointed out to game intelligence followed by 25% highlighted the need for tactical awareness and 12.5% each emphasized on need for psychological preparation and physical conditioning. Interestingly none voted for technical skill refinement.

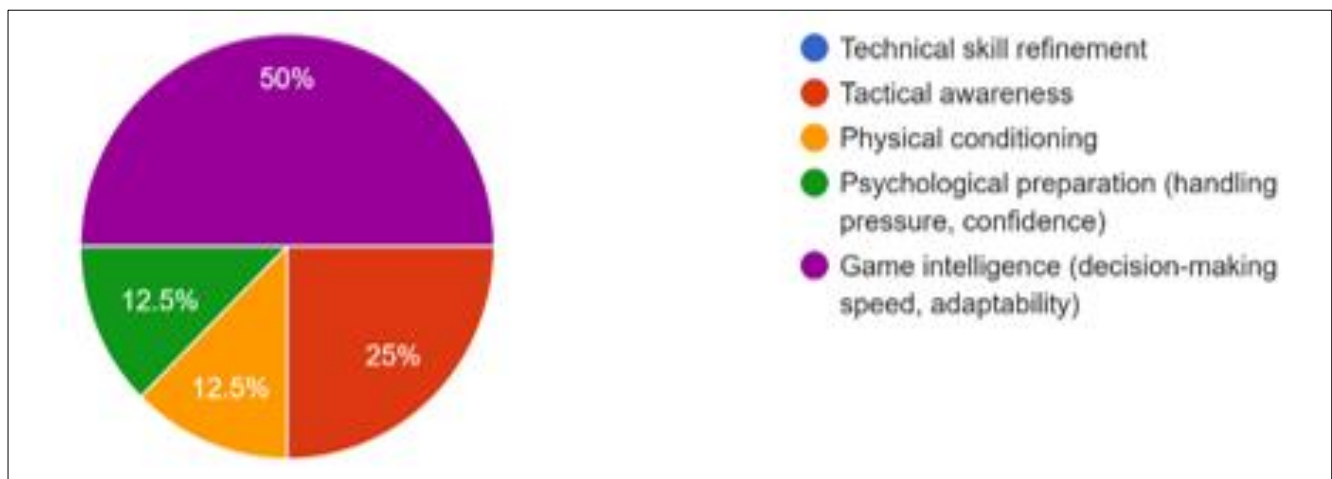


Fig 8: Area that needs the most urgent improvement for better performance in nationals in the upcoming years

Zone wise regional preferences

Upon observing the regional findings zonally as east, west, north, south and north-east. A clear distinction of choices can be seen (Table 2)

Table 2: Individual region's compared zone-wise (Geographically) Kolkata (East-Zone); Ahmadabad (West-Zone); Jammu and Dehradun (North-Zone); Hyderabad and Ernakulam (South-Zone); and Silchar and Guwahati regions (Northeast Zone)

Zone	KVS Regions	Regional Context & Player Profiling	Strategy & Selection Priorities	Preparatory Camp Priorities (Top priority)
East	Kolkata	Technical passing and Strong defensive organization	Selecting individual talents, and Tactical versatility	Playing practice matches – testing tactics, player combinations and building match sharpness under pressure
West	Ahmedabad	Technical passing, and Superior fitness and stamina	Selecting individual talents, and Depth of squad rotation	Playing practice matches – testing tactics, player combinations and building match sharpness under pressure
North	Jammu	Physical/direct: focus on strength, speed, and long balls, and Strong defensive organization	Selecting individual talents, and Tactical versatility	Physical conditioning and peak-ensuring optimal fitness, managing load and peak performance for day 1
	Dehradun	Technical passing, and Superior fitness and stamina	Selecting individual talents, and Tactical versatility	Mental preparation-workshops or sessions on handling pressure, visualization and penalty shootouts
South	Hyderabad	Technical passing, and Leadership and team spirit	Selecting a cohesive group of players and Defensive solidity	Playing practice matches – testing tactics, player combinations and building match sharpness under pressure
	Ernakulam	Technical passing, and Aggressive attacking	Selecting individual talents, and Depth of squad rotation	Tactical familiarization-drilling the primary formation, set-piece and defensive/offensive patterns

North-east	Guwahati	Technical passing, and Aggressive attacking	Selecting individual talents, and Tactical versatility	Physical conditioning and peak-ensuring optimal fitness, managing load and peak performance for day 1
	Silchar	Technical passing and Strong defensive organization	Selecting a cohesive group of players and Tactical versatility	Building team cohesion and spirit- activities to build trust, communication, and a unified identity off the pitch

Discussion and Conclusion

This study attempted to draw attention towards the philosophical approach taken by the coaches/selectors in preparing a competitive team for a tournament like KVS nationals. As evident by the findings, the coaches and selectors seem to be very pragmatic in their idea of selection as well as in the focus points they select for the training camp. Their guiding philosophy is a reflection of the non-standard environment they face during team selection and training while yearning for excellence. This pragmatic philosophy corroborates with earlier studies, where its identified to have occurred in situations of communication gap, multiple groups of people involved to work together and where perspectives often clash ^[12]. The findings can serve as needs analysis for the administrators to develop a more conducive environment for both coaches/selectors and athletes of their regions to excel. Citing the immense potential of a platform like KVS Nationals in U17 Football category, the finding of the study can also play its part for the ambitious mission of “Vision 2047 - A Road Map” of the All India Football Federation (AIFF) ^[13]. KVS is a transferable job, hence the finding can also inform the personnel moving from one region to another about the preferences and pre-existing standards there. This study was only focused on U17 Football (Boys) team event. More such studies can be planned to gain insight regarding other major sports disciplines. Moreover, the finding may form the basis for further empirical opportunities that may enrich the KVS Sports Program.

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