



## The influence of sprint spike bending stiffness on sprinting performance and metatarsophalangeal joint function

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## 1. Background

The metatarsophalangeal joint (MTPJ) has been highlighted by several authors to have an important role in the energetics of the lower limb during sprint running (Bezodis, Salo & Trewartha, 2012; Smith, Lake, Lees, & Worsfold, 2012; Stefanyshyn & Nigg, 1997). In fact, this joint appears to be a net dissipater of energy during stance. It has been speculated by several authors that altering the mechanical properties of running footwear, in particular the longitudinal bending stiffness, is one mechanism by which the kinetics of the MTPJ may be altered (Smith, Lake, & Lees, 2014; Stefanyshyn & Fusco, 2004; Toon, Hopkinson & Kane, 2008) potentially leading towards slightly improved sprint performance. In vertical jumping, stiffer running shoes have been shown to significantly reduce MTPJ energy loss and consequently improve jump height (Stefanyshyn & Nigg, 2000). Similarly in running at 3.5m/s, an increase in the midsole longitudinal bending stiffness both significantly reduced the energy loss and at the same time increased positive work performed (Willwacher, Konig, Potthast, & Bruggemann, 2013).

For maximal sprint running, the effect of sprinting footwear bending stiffness on sprinting performance remains to be fully agreed between researchers, as there is some conflicting evidence in the literature regarding the benefit of wearing stiffer sprint shoes. Stefanyshyn and Fusco (2004) reported a decrease of 0.02s in 20-40 m sprint time for a group of 34 elite national sprinters when stiff carbon insoles were inserted into their running spikes (42 N·mm<sup>-1</sup> bending stiffness, measured using a three-point bending test). Conversely, Ding, Sterzing, Qin, and Cheung (2011) found no systematic influence of sprint spike stiffness upon 25 m acceleration performance for a group of young competitive athletes. When comparing barefoot sprinting to sprinting in sprint spikes, Smith et al. (2014) reported substantial changes in MTPJ function and potential improvements in performance-related parameters

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3 due to wearing spikes. Sprint spikes appeared to have a clear localised effect on the function  
4 of the MTPJ; increasing the work performed by lengthening the moment arm and likely  
5 contributing to the energy produced during push-off. Stefanyshyn and Fusco (2004)  
6 speculated that increasing the shoe bending stiffness would result in an anterior shift in the  
7 point of application of the ground reaction force, thereby increasing the moment arm. This  
8 would result in an increased MTPJ joint moment and energy production during late stance,  
9 therefore enabling a more effective push-off. Willwacher et al. (2013) also observed that  
10 increasing the midsole longitudinal bending stiffness seems to alter mechanical power  
11 generation capacities of the MTPJ plantar flexing muscle tendon units by changing ground  
12 reaction force leverage and decreasing plantar flexion angular velocity. Increasing the  
13 longitudinal bending stiffness altered the lever arms at the MTPJ and ankle joint, changing  
14 the gear ratio; the ratio of external GRF lever arm and internal lever arms of muscle tendon  
15 units acting at a joint, and therefore potentially permitting the muscle tendon units to generate  
16 higher joint moments (Willwacher et al., 2014). However, those authors pointed out that any  
17 energy return at the metatarsophalangeal joint would require both the elastic midsole and the  
18 toes to simultaneously perform a pronounced plantar flexion movement at the end of stance,  
19 therefore energy would need to be transferred to the sprinter at the right place and the right  
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45 In elite sprinters, reported variation in lower limb joint kinetics within groups of sprinters  
46 (Johnson & Buckley, 2001; Bezodis, Kerwin & Salo, 2008) suggests between-sprinter  
47 differences do exist. This variation in technique is important to consider in the context of elite  
48 sprinting, as even slight improvements in performance could affect finishing position within a  
49 sprint race (Bezodis, Salo, & Trewartha, 2014). Similarly, individual athletes may elicit  
50 different biomechanical and performance responses to changes in footwear, suggesting that  
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3 shoe selection is specific to the functional requirements of individuals (Toon, Williams,  
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5 Hopkinson & Kane, 2009) and might (among others) depend upon their ankle plantarflexor  
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7 strength, force-length and force-velocity characteristics (Stefanyshyn & Fusco, 2004).  
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9 Differences in responses to running shoes of varying stiffness coincide with runner's  
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11 preferences and subjective perception (Kleindienst, Michel, & Krabbe 2005). It has been  
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13 suggested that the only way to detect differences that exist between shoes is to employ a  
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15 single-subject analysis (Bates, 1996). Furthermore, individual analysis has been advocated  
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17 for future research to detecting differences between types of running shoes, based upon high  
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19 variability of ground reaction forces reported in male and female groups of runners (Logan et  
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21 al., 2010). Single subject analyses have been advocated in the research when a task could  
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23 potentially elicit different responses / strategies in individuals and when the group mean does  
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25 not necessarily describe well any individual subject response (Revoll, Perry, Edwards, &  
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27 Dickey, 2008).  
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35 Therefore the aim of this study was to first investigate the effect of sprint spike bending  
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37 stiffness on sprinting performance and MTPJ motion in a group of sprinters. This  
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39 experimental design was supplemented by a second investigation using the same footwear  
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41 modifications during sprinting but utilising a single subject design and improved  
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43 biomechanical data collection and analysis (Smith et al., 2012). It was hypothesised that  
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45 group findings may mask some significant individual changes in foot function and sprint  
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47 performance with sprint shoe stiffness.  
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## 50 51 **2. Methods**

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53 This research comprised of two studies, a group study, followed by an individual case-study.  
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### 56 57 *Experimental footwear*

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3 Commercially available sprint spikes (Puma Complete Theseus II) in two sizes (38.5 and 43  
4 EUR) were provided by Puma SE, Germany and custom made insoles of varying longitudinal  
5 bending stiffnesses, made combining different layers of carbon and glass fibre, were inserted  
6 into the identical shoes. Additionally, Asics Hyper Sprint shoes of same sizes were used,  
7 serving as additional controls (A-control). The bending stiffness of the five sprint spike  
8 conditions of each size were measured mechanically: A-control and four Puma test  
9 conditions; P-control (no insole), P-low, P-medium, P-high (added stiffnesses with insoles).  
10 A two point bending test was used (Krumm, Schwanitz & Oldenwald, 2012; Smith et al.,  
11 2014) with 40 mm of bending at a constant velocity of 10 mm/s. A Servo hydraulic material  
12 testing machine was used (Zwick GmbH & Co. KG, Ulm, Germany, stroke 100 mm, load  
13 max. 10 kN) with a LVDT position sensor and a 10 kN load cell (Huppert GmbH Prüf- und  
14 Messtechnik, Herrenberg, Germany) with the sprint spikes placed in a mould and secured  
15 with a metal clamp on the forefoot. The average stiffness for a deformation of 0-40 mm  
16 dorsiflexion at the natural bending line was measured for three trials and then averaged per  
17 left and right shoe (Table 1).  
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### 36 *Group Study*

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39 Twelve competitive athletes (club / regional level) participated in the group study; six male  
40 (mean age  $22.0 \pm 3.6$  years, mean height  $182.7 \pm 4.5$  cm, mean mass  $73.8 \text{ kg} \pm 4.4 \text{ kg}$ , mean  
41 100 m personal best  $11.3 \pm 0.3$  s). and six female (mean age  $21.8 \pm 4.8$  years, mean height  
42  $167.0 \pm 6.2$  cm, mean mass  $60.2 \pm 4.2 \text{ kg}$ , mean 100 m personal best  $12.4 \pm 0.3$  s). Informed  
43 written consent was obtained in accordance with the Ethics Committee of Technische  
44 Universität Chemnitz. All participants fitted shoe size 43 or 38.5.  
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3 After their own warm up and two practice runs at 80% and 100% of their maximum velocity,  
4 sprinters performed eight maximal 40 m sprints from a standing start, along an indoor 100 m  
5 athletics track at Technische Universität Chemnitz. This consisted of two sprint trials in each  
6 Puma footwear condition (P-control, P-low, P-medium, and P-high) and athletes were asked  
7 to sprint maximally. The order of sprint spikes was randomised and counter-balanced and  
8 participants were blind to the footwear condition. Eight minutes rest between each maximal  
9 sprint was given, based upon pilot work examining fatigue over multiple sprint trials (Figure  
10 1). 10 m split time was taken from 30 - 40 m using single beam timing cells. A high speed  
11 video camera (Exilim Pro Ex-F1, 600 Hz sample rate, 1/1000 s shutter speed) captured one  
12 foot contact 15 m into the sprint (acceleration phase). High speed videos were analysed in  
13 Quintic Biomechanics (Quintic Consultancy Ltd.) where the following points were manually  
14 digitised: the heel; the distal end of the hallux and the medial side of the first metatarsal head  
15 (MTH1). For two-dimensional analysis, a marker on MTH1 or MTH2 provides a better  
16 representation of MTPJ motion than a marker on MTH5 (see Smith et al., 2012). The MTPJ  
17 angle was therefore defined as the angle between the forefoot (MTH1 – hallux) and rearfoot  
18 (MTH1 - heel) segments. The raw kinematic data was smoothed using a 4<sup>th</sup> order Butterworth  
19 low pass digital filter with cut off frequencies of 60 Hz for the MTPJ angle and 30 Hz for the  
20 angular velocity.  
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#### 43 *Statistical analysis*

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46 A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the intervention of sprint  
47 spikes stiffness (mean of two trials per condition) on sprint time, MTPJ range of motion,  
48 MTPJ maximum flexion and MTPJ peak angular velocities, both plantarflexion and  
49 dorsiflexion.  
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#### 55 *Individual case study*

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3 This aspect of the research work utilised a novel experimental design that aimed to tease out  
4 the likely small differences in sprint performance and lower limb function when sprinting in  
5 shoes of different stiffness. This part of the research work represents both an evolution to the  
6 study design and improvements to the biomechanical measurements taken, to gain further  
7 insight into individual responses in sprinting performance and MTPJ function to modified  
8 bending stiffness of sprint spikes. This study took place at a different testing location to  
9 enable the Biomechanical analysis.  
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19 Two additional trained, competitive sprinters took part in the individual study; one female  
20 100 m sprinter / hurdler (aged 28 years, height 179cm, mass 68 kg, shoe size 38.5, 100 m  
21 sprint time 12.2 s) and one male 400 m specialist (aged 28 years, height 182cm, mass 73 kg,  
22 shoe size 43, 400 m best time 50.8 s). These two participants were chosen for the individual  
23 study as they were also experienced, well-trained track athletes, whose mean sprinting  
24 velocities at 35 m reflected the mean 30 - 40 m sprinting velocities of the group study  
25 (within one standard deviation). Informed written consent was obtained in accordance with  
26 the Ethics Committee of Liverpool John Moores University.  
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41 Each sprinter attended the lab three times, each time to test a different sprint spike stiffness  
42 (P-low, P-medium or P-high) condition in relation to A-control, therefore three stiffness  
43 conditions were tested in relation to control (Figure 1). The design included a balanced,  
44 presentation of the control shoe condition (A control) and a test shoe condition (P-low, P-  
45 medium or P-high) which minimises the error sources associated with presenting different  
46 test stimuli which are separated by a period of time (Gescheider, 1997). In each testing  
47 session, six sprinting trials per shoe were recorded, with the sprinter swapping shoes between  
48 each trial, e.g. A-control followed by P-low, repeated six times. Therefore, a total of twelve  
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3 maximal sprints were collected per testing sessions, this number was based upon pilot testing  
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5 of the number of sprints practically possible. The sprints were performed on a 70 m indoor  
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7 sprint track at Liverpool John Moores University and the athletes accelerated for  
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9 approximately 35 m before data collection. Athletes were instructed to sprint maximally to 40  
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11 m. A single left foot ground contact in the middle of a force platform (Kistler model 9287B,  
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13 sampling at 1000 Hz) at approximately 35 m was used for analysis. A customized starting  
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15 mark was used to aid the athlete in striking the force plate without the need to alter their  
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17 stride pattern prior to force plate contact. Single beam timing cells were located 2.5 m either  
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19 side of the force platform, therefore recording sprint times over 5 m as the athletes crossed  
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21 the force platform. The athletes were still accelerating at this point.  
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29 Both participants underwent two DEXA scans to optimise the location of markers on the  
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31 metatarsal heads (Smith et al., 2014). Kinematic data were collected using a 6 camera system  
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33 (Pro-Reflex MCU 1000, Qualisys Inc., Sweden) sampling at 1000 Hz. Data were processed  
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35 using Visual3D (C-Motion, Inc.) and a three-segment foot model was used for the kinematic  
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37 analysis and kinetic analysis as detailed in Smith et al. (2012). In brief, the five MTPJ's were  
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39 considered as a single joint rotating about an axis oblique to the sagittal plane defined by  
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41 markers (11 mm diameter) on MTH1 and 5. Holes were cut out in the spikes for markers to  
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43 be located on MTH1, MTH5 and MTH2. MTH2 was a virtual marker identified using a 3D  
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45 pointer device (C-motion Inc., Canada). When the sprint spikes were swapped, a new  
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47 standing calibration and pointer trial was performed. Joint positional and force data were  
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49 smoothed using a fourth-order low pass Butterworth filter with a cut-off frequency ( $F_c$ ) of  
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51 100 Hz. This was necessary to preserve the high frequency aspects of the signal previously  
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53 identified and important for determining the presence of any positive joint power during the  
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55 push-off phase (Smith et al. 2012). Force platform point of force application (PFA)  
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3 measurements were determined above a vertical force threshold of 100 N for initial landing  
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5 and 50 N at the end of ground contact, based upon visual inspection of PFA curves, as errors  
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7 were greater at the start of foot contact where higher loading rates were experienced. Below  
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9 these thresholds the PFA was distorted and in a position outside of the forefoot, due to low  
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11 loading on the force platform. MTPJ joint moments and powers were calculated when the  
12  
13 centre of pressure moved distally to its oblique axis during sprinting ground contact.  
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### 16 17 *Statistical analysis*

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19 For each sprinter's within-subject statistical analysis, the Model Statistic was used. This  
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21 approach was chosen to replicate previous single-subject studies assessing performance of  
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23 sports shoes (Dufek & Bates, 1991). The Model Statistic is the single-subject equivalent of an  
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25 independent t-test (Bates, James, & Dufek 2004) as using a repeated-measures approach in a  
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27 single subject design is inappropriate, therefore the more appropriate approach is to treat trial  
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29 values as independent measures and use the corresponding independent test procedure (Bates,  
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31 1996). The mean absolute differences between two conditions (for example MTPJ Moment in  
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33 a stiff shoe minus MTPJ moment in the control condition) is calculated and compared to a  
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35 critical difference. The critical difference is the product of the standard deviation (of all trials  
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37 in each footwear condition) and a critical value based upon sample (trial) size from Bates et  
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39 al., (2004). The critical value used in this study was 1.2408 for six trial comparisons (twelve  
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41 trials in total) and  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance. The interpretation of a mean absolute  
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43 difference greater than the critical difference is that the difference is due to sampling error at  
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45 a probability of  $\alpha$ , therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. The single-subject, repeated trials  
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47 design also accounts for any learning or fatigue during the testing session, as every trial in a  
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49 stiffness condition is compared to the control (Figure 1).  
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## 55 56 **3. Results**

### 57 58 *Group study*

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3 Thus, bending stiffness values of the sprint spikes used in this study indicate that, by adding  
4 the insoles, bending stiffness was increased considerably in comparison to the commercial  
5 sprint spike conditions used, P-high had almost three times greater stiffness (273%) than the  
6 A-control shoe (Table 1). Furthermore, four additional commercially available sprint spikes  
7 were mechanically tested and had average stiffnesses ranging from  $190 \pm 5.3$  N/m to  $256 \pm$   
8  $23.7$  N/m.  
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20 Average 30 m to 40 m sprint time for all trials was 1.18 s ( $\pm 0.08$  s), corresponding to a mean  
21 velocity of 8.50 m/s ( $\pm 0.57$  m/s). There were no significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in mean  
22 sprinting velocity across the shoe stiffness conditions (Figure 2) ( $p = 0.634$ ,  $F = 0.427$ ).  
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30 Individual differences existed between sprinters with some sprinters appearing to perform  
31 slightly better in P-control and others possibly performing slightly better with stiff insoles  
32 (Figure 3). Observations of individual performance differences between shoe stiffness  
33 conditions did not appear to be related to overall sprinting ability. Both faster and slower  
34 sprinters demonstrated either increasing or decreasing sprint performances with increasing  
35 shoe bending stiffness (Figure 3).  
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47 There were no significant differences in the metatarsophalangeal range of motion during  
48 stance with mean values of  $40.5^\circ (\pm 3.0^\circ)$ ,  $38.1^\circ (\pm 4.5^\circ)$ ,  $38.3^\circ (\pm 2.8^\circ)$  and  $37.5^\circ (\pm 4.7$   
49  $^\circ)$  for P-control, P-low, P-medium and P-high respectively ( $p = 0.277$ ,  $F = 1.510$ ). Nor were  
50 there any statistically significant differences in maximum dorsiflexion ( $p = 0.600$ ,  $F = 0.654$ )  
51 or plantarflexion ( $p = 0.819$ ,  $F = 0.109$ ) angular velocities across the four conditions.  
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### *Individual case study*

The female participant achieved highest mean sprinting velocities in the P-medium and P-high, however the only significant difference, to A-control, was found for P-high, which resulted in a 2% increase in measured velocity (Table 3). The male participant achieved highest mean sprinting velocities in P-medium shoe, however there were no significant differences in velocities between any of the P stiffness conditions and A-control (Table 2). Tables 2 and 3 show individualised differences in MTPJ kinematics and kinetics between the conditions.

The female participant exhibited significantly higher resultant MTPJ moments in all three P stiffness conditions, in comparison to A-control (Table 3). In P-high the joint moment was increased by approximately 8.9 N·m (a 15 % increase). P-low and P-high significantly increased power production during the push-off phase of sprinting, although there were no favourable reductions in energy loss with the stiffened shoe conditions. Similarly, the male participant demonstrated significant differences in work performed at the MTPJ with significantly higher joint moments in all P stiffness conditions, in comparison to A-control, with P-high condition resulting in the highest joint moment (Figure 4). The MTPJ was a net absorber of energy during stance with up to 42.0 J lost during the energy absorption phase in the A-control (Table 2). All three P shoe conditions significantly reduced the amount of energy lost, compared to A-control. The largest reduction was in P-medium with 8.2 J (23%) difference in energy loss compared to A-control. A significantly increased positive energy was created during the push-off phase at the end of stance in P-low, producing 3.3 J energy, compared to 2.2 J energy in the A-control.

## **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

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3 This study found that increased sprint shoe bending stiffness was generally not linked with  
4 improved sprinting performance for a group of trained sprinters. The small improvement in  
5 performance reported by Stefanyshyn and Fusco (2004) may be due to a larger number of  
6 subjects used (34 sprinters) and a more homogeneous group of older elite athletes. However,  
7 the authors argued that performance enhancements of 0.7% are quite large, and therefore  
8 worthwhile, in elite sprinting, possibly making a difference in finishing position in a race.  
9 The lack of group mean shoe differences seen in the group study may be the result of high  
10 variability in individual results. The number of subjects ( $n = 12$ ) and trials used in this study  
11 was not dissimilar to, or greater than previous biomechanical studies using trained sprinters  
12 (Bezodis et al., 2008; Ding et al., 2011; Gittoes & Wilson, 2010; Johnson & Buckley, 2001;  
13 Stefanyshyn & Nigg, 1997), although it is acknowledged that the sprinters in this study were  
14 younger and not world-class. The results from this study do, however, agree with the  
15 suggestion that the stiffness each athlete requires to produce maximal performance is subject-  
16 specific (Stefanyshyn & Fusco, 2004). Therefore, it is suggested that an athlete's optimal  
17 sprint shoe stiffness is individualised and likely dependent upon their perceptions and  
18 previous experiences (Kleindenst, Michel & Krabbe, 2005) forefoot structure or stiffness  
19 (Oleson, Adler & Goldsmith, 2005), and arch stiffness (Butler, Davis & Hamill, 2006).

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44 In the individual case studies, the female participant demonstrated significantly improved  
45 sprinting performance in P-high stiffness condition, whilst improvements in sprinting speed  
46 for the male participant were not significant. For both participants, stiffer sprint spikes did  
47 appear to have a controlling effect over the MTPJ kinematics, significantly reducing the  
48 range of motion and also reducing the extent and rate of MTPJ dorsiflexion during stance and  
49 plantarflexion after push-off. This reaffirms, on an individual level, the restrictive influence  
50 that stiffened footwear seems to have on the normal bending of the MTPJ during stance,  
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3 possibly influencing the effectiveness of the Windlass mechanism (Hicks, 1954), although  
4 this would likely be dependent upon the individual's foot dynamic stiffness. However, the  
5 controlling effect over the behaviour of the foot, does not appear to adversely affect energy  
6 production of the joint (Smith et al., 2014) and both athletes were able to produce energy  
7 within the foot/shoe complex during the push-off phase of sprinting. This is in agreement  
8 with Lin et al., (2013) who demonstrated that for walking, carbon fibre insoles effectively  
9 reduced the windlass effect, but also facilitated storage of energy that can be used for  
10 efficient gait propulsion without needing to dorsiflex the MTPJ to a great extent.  
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24 The results of this study suggest that stiffer sprint spikes may increase the loading applied on  
25 the central forefoot and may also facilitate greater anterior progression of the centre of  
26 pressure, as evidenced by a greater moment arm, to enable increased propulsion during push  
27 off. Values for MTPJ moments and a substantial net loss of energy at this joint are similar to  
28 those reported in other studies for sprinting (Smith et al., 2014; Stefanyshyn & Nigg, 1997;  
29 Toon et al., 2009). It is clear that the longitudinal stiffness of sprint spikes have a clear  
30 localised effect on the MPTJ, increasing the work performed on the joint, lengthening the  
31 moment arm and producing small amounts of energy during push-off, in agreement with  
32 Smith et al., 2014. However, it is also likely that the range of motion, joint moment and  
33 resultant power at the ankle joint will also be altered by forefoot bending stiffness (Chen et  
34 al. 2014). Wilwacher et al., (2014) demonstrated increasing the longitudinal bending stiffness  
35 in running shoes led to a significant anterior shift of all lower limb lever arms, this effect  
36 greater at the more distal joints In particular, higher ankle joint moments might be beneficial  
37 for increasing storage and return of energy in the Achilles Tendon, particularly in elite  
38 sprinters who are likely to have higher strength potential of the plantar flexor muscle tendon  
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6 It is impossible to compare the bending stiffness to other studies, due to different methods of  
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8 quantifying longitudinal bending stiffness, plus the unknown stiffness of sprinters' own  
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10 sprinting shoes. However, in this current study, the mechanical stiffness of the whole sprint  
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12 spike system was determined mechanically and every stiffness condition was quantified and  
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14 compared to a range of commercially available sprint spikes. It is also acknowledged that the  
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16 testing protocol was modified from the group study to the individual case-study. However,  
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18 this was done so in order to improve both the study design (number of testing session trials  
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20 and conditions), and biomechanical measurements (MTPJ kinetics) possible for exploring  
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22 individual responses to sprint spike stiffness in greater detail.  
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26 The high bending stiffness of the sprint spikes may allow the athletes to push off but still  
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28 achieve substantial rigidity from the foot and shoe as a system. This concurs with the findings  
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30 of Willwacher et al. (2013) for lower-velocity running; an increase in shoe stiffness around  
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32 the MTPJ provides better working conditions for plantarflexing muscle tendon units,  
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34 increasing the push-off duration. Participant one exhibited higher ranges of motion than  
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36 participant two, indicating differences between the participants in their natural range of  
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38 motion and flexibility within the foot and differing inherent foot stiffness or foot structures  
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40 (e.g. high / low arch, plantar fascia stiffness). This is concurrent with the wide range of arch  
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42 stiffness reported in high arch ( $1993.8 \pm 1112.1$  kg/arch height index) and low arch ( $788.0 \pm$   
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44  $407.0$  kg/arch height index) runners (Butler et al., 2006) Participant two experienced larger  
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46 reductions in angular motion and peak angular velocities with the stiffer sprint spikes,  
47  
48 suggesting greater responses to shoe stiffness. Both participants demonstrated increased joint  
49  
50 moments with increased stiffness of sprint spike. Energy production during the last 10  
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52 milliseconds of stance was also increased by a stiffer sprint shoe.  
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6 The two participants in this study exhibited different responses to the footwear conditions,  
7  
8 this may be due to anatomical differences and neurological responses (performance  
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10 strategies). The participant's response has been suggested to depend on their recognition /  
11  
12 perception of the perturbation, which in turn will be a function of the individual's past  
13  
14 experiences (Bates, 1996). Response patterns vary along a continuum (from a Newtonian  
15  
16 response whereby the perturbation is completely ignored to a fully accommodating response).  
17  
18 Individual performance strategies are likely to be the norm rather than the exception, due to  
19  
20 the complexity of the human machine and its numerous associated functional degrees, along  
21  
22 with the different experiences, perceptions and expectations of the participants (Bates, 1996).  
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29 The individual responses exhibited in this study suggest that sprinting performance may be  
30  
31 improved by implementation of relevant shoe mechanical characteristics. It appears that shoe  
32  
33 selection may be specific to the functional requirements of individual athletes and athletes  
34  
35 will likely respond differently to footwear modifications. Future work should identify key  
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37 anatomical or biomechanical factors that influence foot function during maximal sprinting.  
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39 For example, the influence of the natural stiffness of the human forefoot, and the strength and  
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41 velocity characteristics of the ankle plantarflexors and toe flexors, are morphological factors  
42  
43 which may influence foot function during sprinting and may dictate appropriate shoe  
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45 selection. Besides changes to the overall longitudinal bending stiffness, other mechanical  
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47 characteristics of sprint spike design, such as the toe spring angle warrant future  
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49 investigation. The importance of appropriately modelling the position and orientation of the  
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51 MTPJ has been previously established (Smith et al., 2012), therefore the location of the  
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3 natural bending line of the sprint spikes in relation to the anatomical joint axis will likely  
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5 affect the resultant motion at the foot.  
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8 Overall, the findings suggest that high variability in individual responses to sprint shoe  
9  
10 bending stiffness manipulations can be masked by group mean findings and a single-subject  
11  
12 approach appears warranted to further investigate whether shoe bending stiffness can be  
13  
14 optimised to improve individual sprint performance.  
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23  
24

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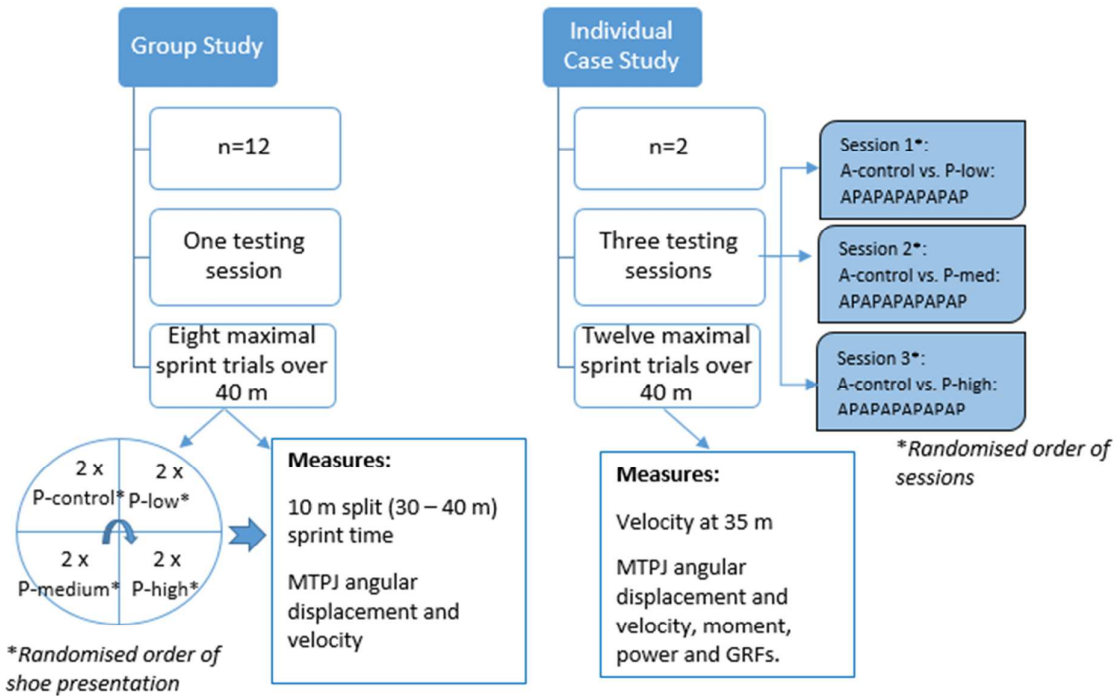


Figure 1. Schematic demonstrating study design and protocol for the Group Study and Individual Case Study

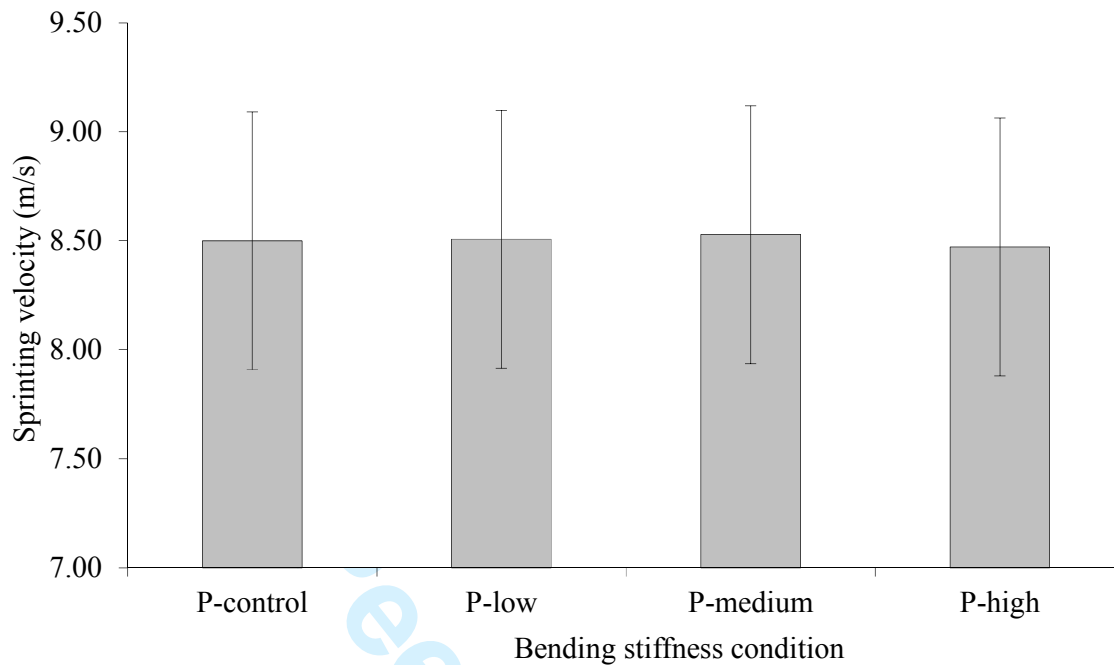


Figure 2. Mean (SD) sprinting velocity for twelve sprinting subjects performing two sprints in four sprint spike stiffness conditions.

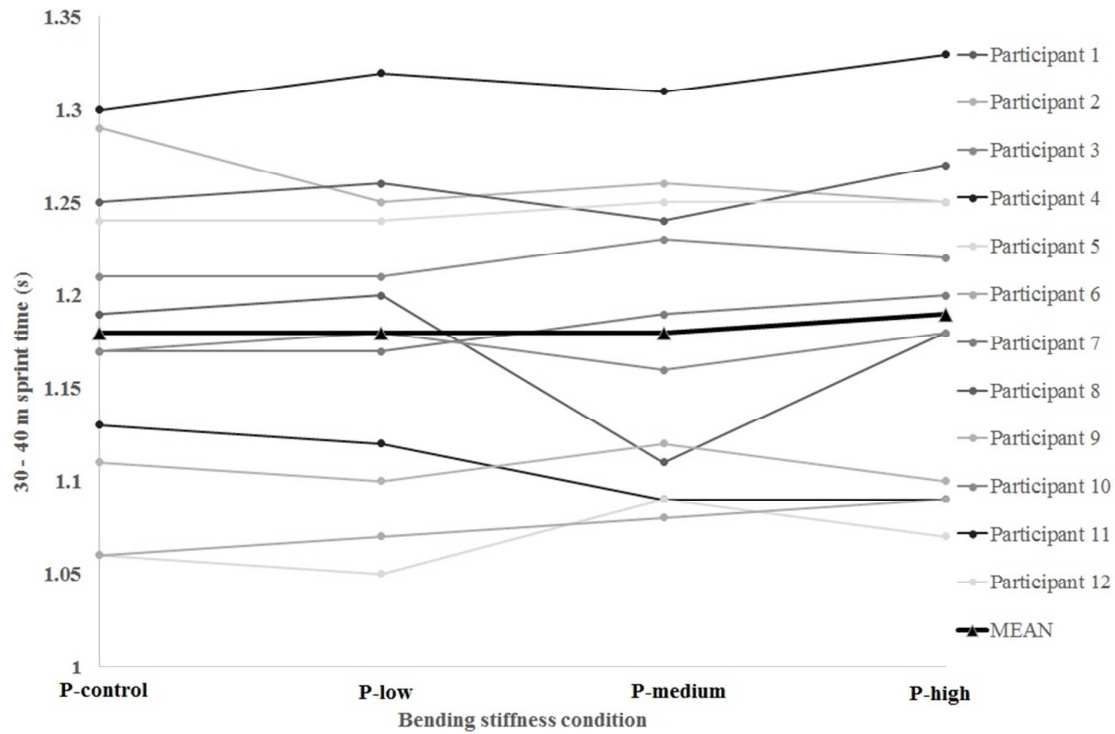


Figure 3. 10 m split (30 – 40m) sprint time for twelve sprinting participants performing two sprints each in four sprint spike bending stiffness conditions. Each line represents a different sprinter.

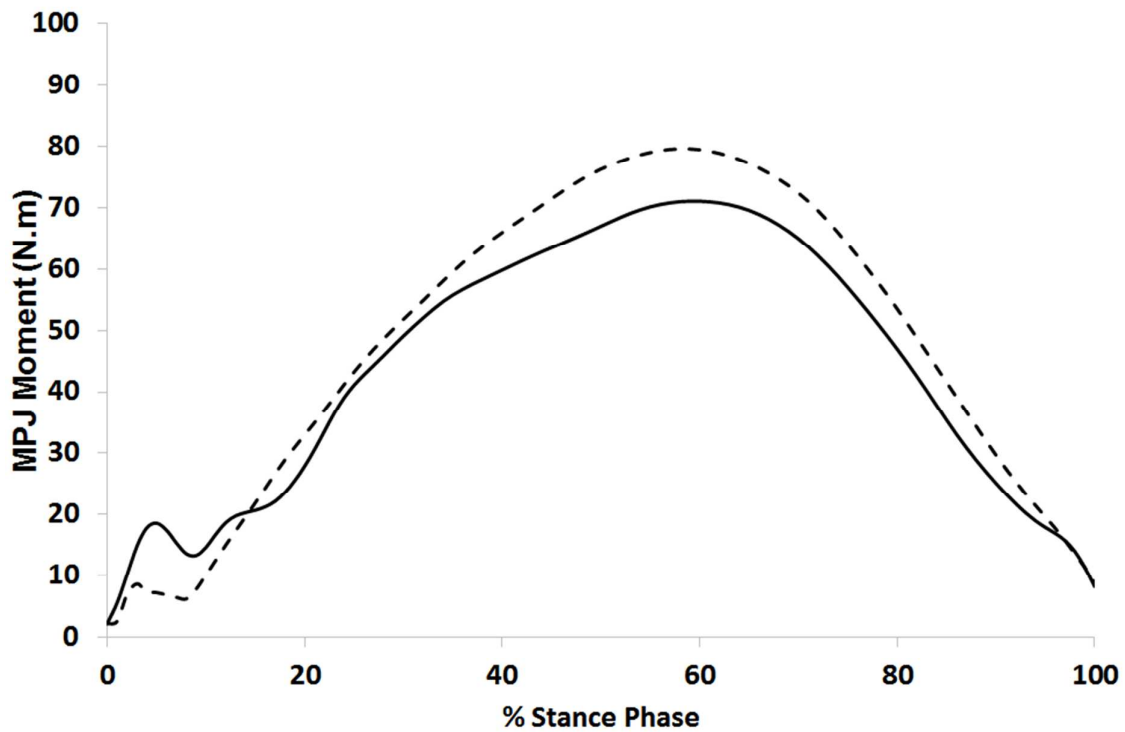


Figure 4. Mean resultant MTPJ moment during the stance phase of sprinting for male sprinter in the individual case study, for condition A-control; solid line, and P-medium; dashed line. Peak moment was significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) different between the two bending stiffness conditions.

Table 1. Average stiffness (and stiffness normalised to the Puma no insole condition) of the sprint spike conditions used in the study, left and right shoes.

Shoe condition	Shoe size 38.5 Average Mechanical stiffness (N/m) of left and right shoe and Normalised stiffness to condition 0 (%)	Shoe size 43 Average Mechanical stiffness (N/m) of left and right shoe and Normalised stiffness to condition 0(%)
Puma no insole	254.6 ± 22.7 (100%)	297.4 ± 7.6 (100%)
Puma low stiffness insole (low)	314.6 ± 7.8 (124%)	343.1 ± 6.0 (115%)
Puma medium stiffness insole (medium)	367.0 ± 19.7 (144%)	408.6 ± 10.5 (± 137%)
Puma high stiffness insole (high)	501.7 ± 43.6 (197%)	472.1 ± 31.6 (159%)
Asics Baseline	183.66 ± 6.25 (72%)	197.9 ± 29.6 (67%)



Table 2. Male sprinter's mean sprinting velocity and selected MTPJ kinematic and kinetic variables for low, medium and high stiffness conditions to corresponding baseline conditions (Asics baseline). \* denotes a significant difference to the corresponding baseline measure ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Stiffness	Asics baseline	Low	Asics baseline	Medium	Asics baseline	High
Speed (m/s)	7.66 ( $\pm 0.22$ )	7.60 ( $\pm 0.15$ )	8.05 ( $\pm 0.27$ )	8.12 ( $\pm 0.27$ )	7.94 ( $\pm 0.21$ )	7.90 ( $\pm 0.24$ )
MTPJ Range of Motion ( $^{\circ}$ )	37.1 ( $\pm 1.4$ )	31.6* ( $\pm 1.5$ )	37.8 ( $\pm 1.2$ )	28.5* ( $\pm 2.0$ )	36.5 ( $\pm 1.6$ )	30.3* (2.5)
Peak Dorsiflexion angular velocity ( $^{\circ}/s$ )	844.2 ( $\pm 49.1$ )	703.3* ( $\pm 84.2$ )	773.6 ( $\pm 74.3$ )	534.4* ( $\pm 46.4$ )	783.8 ( $\pm 44.8$ )	697.2* ( $\pm 68.5$ )
Peak Plantarflexion angular velocity ( $^{\circ}/s$ )	-2359.0 ( $\pm 95.0$ )	-2146.8* ( $\pm 107.0$ )	-2507.4 ( $\pm 175.4$ )	-2150.2* ( $\pm 187.9$ )	-2288.0 ( $\pm 392.7$ )	-2120.2* ( $\pm 331.5$ )
Peak vertical force Fz (N)	2261.9 ( $\pm 60.0$ )	2194.5* ( $\pm 79.5$ )	2271.7 ( $\pm 36.9$ )	2345.6* ( $\pm 72.1$ )	2253.2 ( $\pm 98.6$ )	2324.9 ( $\pm 89.1$ )
Peak plantar flexor moment (N·m)	83.1 ( $\pm 2.4$ )	87.6* ( $\pm 2.9$ )	72.1 ( $\pm 5.0$ )	79.7* ( $\pm 3.3$ )	75.8 ( $\pm 4.6$ )	87.6* ( $\pm 6.6$ )
Peak Positive Power (W) generated during plantarflexion	220.3 ( $\pm 23.9$ )	292.3 ( $\pm 73.5$ )	241.9 ( $\pm 24.2$ )	241.8 ( $\pm 22.0$ )	265.5 ( $\pm 52.3$ )	386.5* ( $\pm 128.5$ )
Peak Negative Power (W) generated during dorsiflexion	-1053.7 ( $\pm 78.1$ )	-976.2* ( $\pm 97.6$ )	-963.8 ( $\pm 102.4$ )	-678.2* ( $\pm 88.2$ )	-927.2 ( $\pm 78.2$ )	-916.2 ( $\pm 121.0$ )
Total Energy generated (J) during plantarflexion	0.6 ( $\pm 0.4$ )	0.4 ( $\pm 0.2$ )	0.2 ( $\pm 0.2$ )	0.2 ( $\pm 0.2$ )	0.5 ( $\pm 0.2$ )	0.8 ( $\pm 0.6$ )
Total Energy absorbed (J) during dorsiflexion	-42.0 ( $\pm 2.3$ )	-35.8* ( $\pm 3.0$ )	-35.0 ( $\pm 4.1$ )	-26.3* ( $\pm 1.3$ )	-37.8 ( $\pm 2.0$ )	-34.2* ( $\pm 3.3$ )
Total energy generated (J) during push-off	2.2 ( $\pm 0.3$ )	3.3* ( $\pm 0.6$ )	2.4 ( $\pm 0.4$ )	2.7 ( $\pm 0.4$ )	2.8 ( $\pm 0.7$ )	3.2 ( $\pm 0.6$ )

Table 3. Female sprinter's mean sprinting velocity and selected MTPJ kinematic and kinetic variables for low, medium and high stiffness conditions and corresponding baseline conditions (Asics baseline). \* denotes a significant difference to the corresponding baseline measure ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Stiffness	Asics baseline	Low	Asics baseline	Medium	Asics baseline	High
Speed (m/s)	8.15 ( $\pm 0.23$ )	8.14 ( $\pm 0.14$ )	8.07 ( $\pm 0.18$ )	8.20 ( $\pm 0.08$ )	8.04 ( $\pm 0.14$ )	8.20* ( $\pm 0.09$ )
Metatarsophalangeal Range of Motion ( $^{\circ}$ )	37.9 ( $\pm 3.8$ )	42.3* ( $\pm 3.1$ )	41.1 ( $\pm 2.5$ )	39.2 ( $\pm 1.2$ )	46.8 ( $\pm 2.0$ )	41.3* (3.0)
Peak Dorsiflexion angular velocity ( $^{\circ}/s$ )	1182.7 ( $\pm 314.4$ )	1228.3 ( $\pm 156.7$ )	1128.2 ( $\pm 158.1$ )	1068.5 ( $\pm 184.8$ )	1334.2 ( $\pm 261.3$ )	1197.8 ( $\pm 66.0$ )
Peak Plantarflexion angular velocity ( $^{\circ}/s$ )	-3071.0 ( $\pm 143.1$ )	-2729.3* ( $\pm 209.7$ )	-3472.0 ( $\pm 272.9$ )	-3008.5* ( $\pm 280.1$ )	-3080.8 ( $\pm 48.7$ )	-2476.5* ( $\pm 170.2$ )
Peak vertical force Fz (N)	2057.8 ( $\pm 36.3$ )	2144.0* ( $\pm 36.7$ )	2083.2 ( $\pm 39.1$ )	2136.1* ( $\pm 36.6$ )	2037.2 ( $\pm 34.8$ )	2078.1* ( $\pm 29.3$ )
Peak Plantarflexor moment (N.m)	53.7 ( $\pm 5.6$ )	64.0* ( $\pm 5.9$ )	56.0 ( $\pm 4.4$ )	72.7* ( $\pm 7.8$ )	58.7 ( $\pm 9.1$ )	67.6* ( $\pm 11.5$ )
Peak Positive Power (W) generated during plantarflexion	201.2 ( $\pm 100.0$ )	292.3 ( $\pm 73.5$ )	183.7 ( $\pm 81.0$ )	253.3 ( $\pm 33.9$ )	333.9 ( $\pm 148.9$ )	266.5 ( $\pm 57.7$ )
Peak Negative Power (W) generated during dorsiflexion	-691.7 ( $\pm 61.2$ )	-867.0 ( $\pm 55.0$ )	-777.4 ( $\pm 90.9$ )	-855.1 ( $\pm 90.6$ )	-1000.2 ( $\pm 169.2$ )	-927.9 ( $\pm 50.0$ )
Total Energy generated (J) during plantarflexion	1.4 ( $\pm 1.1$ )	0.5* ( $\pm 0.2$ )	1.3 ( $\pm 1.0$ )	0.9 ( $\pm 0.5$ )	2.0 ( $\pm 1.5$ )	1.3 ( $\pm 0.9$ )
Total Energy absorbed (J) during dorsiflexion	-30.6 ( $\pm 2.3$ )	-33.3 ( $\pm 2.0$ )	-31.2 ( $\pm 2.8$ )	-36.4* ( $\pm 3.9$ )	-34.1 ( $\pm 4.3$ )	-36.9 ( $\pm 6.6$ )
Total energy generated (J) during push-off	0.3 ( $\pm 0.1$ )	2.3* ( $\pm 0.6$ )	1.6 ( $\pm 0.7$ )	2.1 ( $\pm 0.4$ )	0.9 ( $\pm 0.4$ )	2.1* ( $\pm 0.5$ )