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Headline: Could having a fat head make you a better footballer? Men with wide faces score more goals - but also commit more fouls

Could having a fat head make you a better footballer? Men with wide faces score more goals - but also commit more fouls

- Researchers analysed 1,000 players from 2010 South Africa World Cup
- They measured each of the faces on a facial-width-to-height ratio (FWHR)
- FWHR is the distance between the cheekbones divided by the distance between the mid-brow and the upper lip
- Players with a high FWHR were more likely to score, but also commit fouls
- Past studies have shown FWHR is associated with aggressive behaviour
- It is thought that the wider shape indicates higher levels of testosterone

By VICTORIA WOOLLASTON FOR MAILONLINE

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Wayne Rooney, Mario Balotelli and Frank Lampard are successful footballers because their faces are the optimum shape.

That's according to new research, which compared the facial-width-to-height ratios (FWHRs) of high-ranking footballers to their on-pitch record.

It discovered that players with faces that are wider than they are tall are more likely to score goals, but also commit fouls.



Wayne Rooney (left) and Mario Balotelli (right) are successful footballers because their faces are the optimum shape, claims new research. Experts discovered that players with a high facial-width-to-height ratios (FWHRs) are more likely to score goals, but also commit fouls

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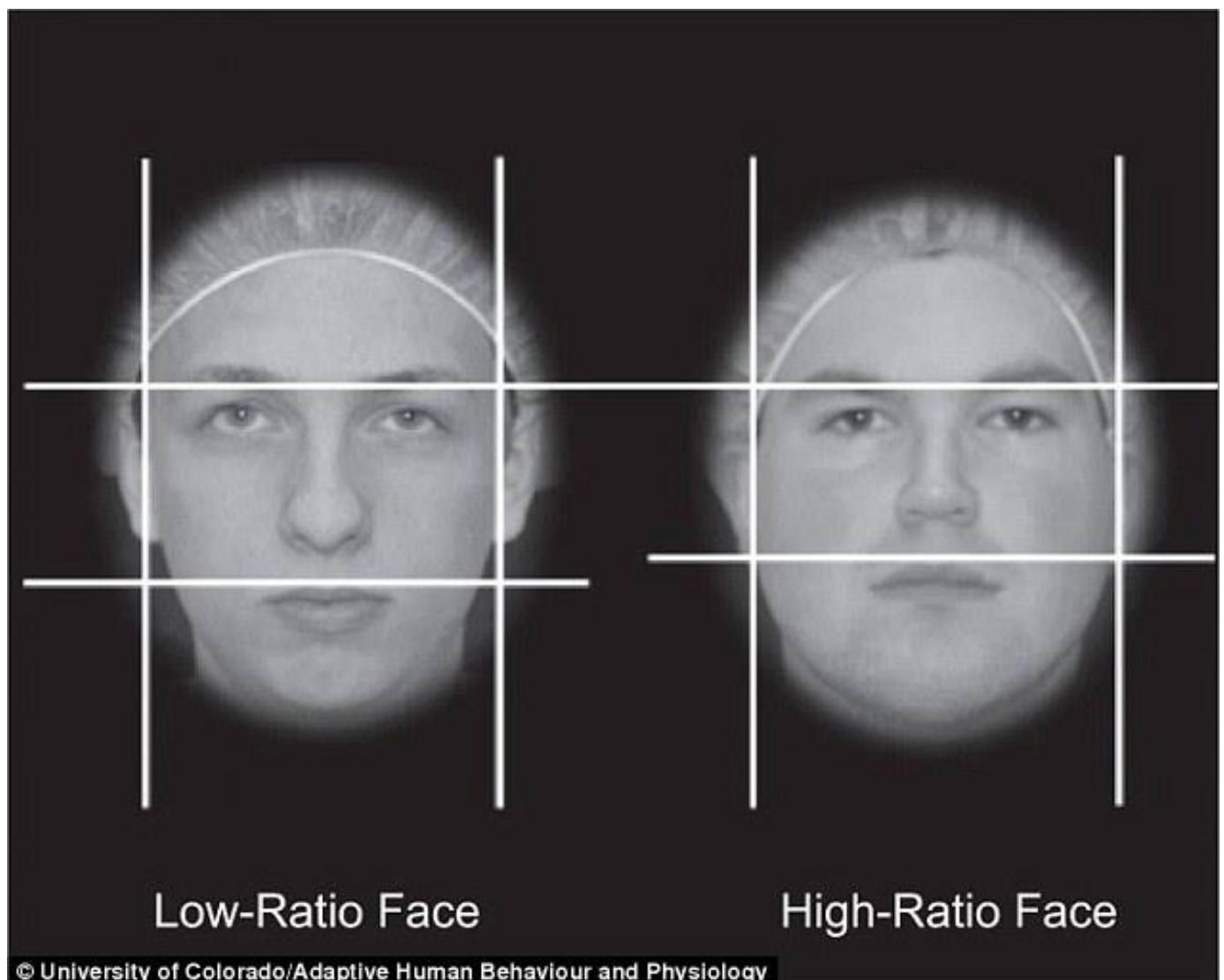
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The Manchester United star, nicknamed Shrek because of the shape of his head, has the features that mark out the best forwards from the rest, claim experts from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Mr Rooney, who will be awarded with a Golden Cap at Wembley on Saturday to mark his 100th appearance for England, has also received six red cards in his career.

While Italian Mr Balotelli has scored 33 goals in his international career, but has also received 50 yellow cards in his career for fouls and other offences.

Dr Keith Welker from the university analysed 1,000 players from 32 countries at the 2010 South Africa World Cup.



Researchers from the University of Colorado at Boulder analysed 1,000 players from 32 countries at the 2010 South Africa World Cup. They measured each of the players' faces on a FWHR chart (pictured). FWHR is the distance between the cheekbones divided by the distance between the mid-brow and the upper lip

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Footballer Peter Crouch (left) has a low-ratio face, while Frank Lampard's face scores higher on the FWHR scale. Both midfielders and forwards with greater FWHRs were more likely to commit fouls

He measured each of their faces on a FWHR chart. Both midfielders and forwards with greater FWHRs were more likely to commit fouls.

Forwards with higher FWHRs also were more likely to score or lay on goals, according to the findings published in the journal Adaptive Human Behaviour and Physiology.

'Previous research into facial structure of athletes has been primarily in the United States and Canada,' said Dr Welker.

'No-one had really looked at how facial-width-to-height ratio is associated with athletic performance by comparing people from across the world.'

FWHR is the distance between the cheekbones divided by the distance between the mid-brow and the upper lip.

Past studies have shown a high FWHR is associated with more aggressive behaviour.

For example, high FWHR is associated with greater antisocial and unethical behaviour, but also greater success among CEOs and achievement drive among US presidents.

DOES HAVING A WIDE FACE MAKE YOU RICH?

A recent report found that men with wider faces earn around £1,300 more than those with narrow faces when asking for a bonus.

However, researchers from the University of California said this comes with a compromise, as wide-faced people fared less well when it came to business negotiations.

A separate study from Singapore Management University found that women are drawn to men with broader faces for short-term relationships, but they do not tend to see them as husband material.

This could be because men with wider faces are perceived to be more dominant and aggressive. While this may initially make them appear desirable, they are less appealing traits in a long-term partner.

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The Colorado-based researchers for the latest study chose to look at the World Cup because of the quality and quantity of the data available.



The theory also applies to other sports, such as rugby and cycling. Examples include rugby player James Haskell (left) and Olympic medal winner Chris Hoy (right). Scientists have several ideas about how FWHR may be associated with aggression. One possibility is it is related to testosterone exposure earlier in life

Dr Welker said: 'There are a lot of athletic data out there.

'We were exploring contexts to look at aggressive behaviour and found the World Cup, which quantifies goals, fouls and assists, provides a multinational way of addressing whether facial structure produces this aggressive behaviour and performance.'

The theory also applies to other sports, such as rugby and cycling. Examples include James Haskell and Olympic medal winner Chris Hoy.

Scientists have several ideas about how FWHR may be associated with aggression. One possibility is it is related to testosterone exposure earlier in life.

Testosterone during puberty can affect a variety of physical traits, including bone density, muscle growth and cranial shape, added Dr Welker.