

The importance of a physiotherapist in the management of sport teams

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The team physiotherapist has become one of the most important assets any coach can have when working with a team. The physiotherapist brings dynamics to the warming up, conditioning, muscle activation as well as the recovery of the players. Due to the high intensity of matches, tournaments and training sessions a scientific approach towards the correct prevention, management and rehabilitation of sport injuries has become a necessity when managing any team.



Definition of the Sports Physiotherapist in team sport:

The basic function of a Physiotherapist in Sport is the application of treatment by physical means: electrical, thermal, mechanical, hydraulic, and manual therapeutic exercises with special techniques. The Physiotherapist in Sport focuses its objectives in the field of sport and physical activity. Based on the definition of the WCPT * on Physiotherapy in Sport, this is the set of methods, techniques and performances, which through the use and application of physical agents prevent, recover and readjust a person with sport or exercise injuries at different levels.

The scope of Physiotherapy in teams sport:

Outreach in sport:

The physiotherapist will advise the sports people and professionals linked to the team and perform any actions that help improve the conditions of avoidance of injury to the athlete.

Prevention:

The Physiotherapist in Sport should be alert to avoid as far as possible all those factors that might bring up injuries by sports in general and of each particular sport, associated injuries and / or consequences of injury primary, and its possible recurrence. This includes conditioning, training and pre-match activation.

Recovery:

The Physiotherapist in Sport should regain the functionality of the athlete as quickly as possible, accelerating the biological processes of recovery from injury, limiting his training as little as possible and ensure that they are reinstated to the team with the greatest prospects for success.

Rehabilitation:

The Physiotherapist's aim, after recovering from injury, is to put all his effort into the regaining of muscle strength and mobility. The Physiotherapist in Sport should regain the functionality of the athlete as quickly as possible, accelerating the biological processes of recovery from injury, limiting his training as little as possible and ensure that they are reinstated into the team, with the greatest prospects for success

Teaching:

The Physiotherapist in Sport should aim to improve all the facets of knowledge that contribute to the training of top professionals in team sport.

Research:

Physiotherapists in Sport should conduct studies that can contribute to the prevention of injuries, the treatment by the physiotherapist and the enhanced performance of the team.

What does the team Physiotherapist do in practice?

- Assessment and Treatment of acute and chronic injuries on rest days.
- Stretching before training or matches.
- Muscle activation before training and matches.
- Pre match strapping / treatments.
- Medical cover at training sessions and matches.
- Medical screening and injury prevention.
- Liaising with management regarding the severity of injuries and the conditioning of the team.
- Referral for Scans / Surgery.
- Rehabilitation of the injured player.
- Recovery sport massages, hydrotherapy pool sessions and recovery ice-baths or contrast baths after matches.
- Psychological support during tournaments and matches.



Assessment and treatment of acute and chronic injuries:

- **Acute Injuries require early assessment and intervention**
 - Anti inflammatory treatment modalities.
 - Importance of compression and ice
 - Intensive Physiotherapy, strengthening, mobility and regaining function.
 - Rehabilitation of the injury and maintenance of full body strength.
 - Prevention of recurrence by giving home exercises, stretching and proprioception exercises

- **Chronic Injuries**
 - Ongoing management and training modifications
 - Ongoing rehabilitation



Stretching and muscle activation before training or matches:

- The physiotherapist is a specialist in the field of applying the correct stretching and stretching methods to prevent injury during the team warm up prior to a game.
- The use of evidence based muscle activation techniques to activate local and global muscle stabilisers before a game.



Pre-Match Strapping and Treatment:

- A large percentage of players use prophylactic strapping.
- The application of kinematic taping for muscle activation.
- Numerous players are playing with injuries and require treatment pre-match to improve performance.

Medical Cover at Matches and Training:

- Immediate Medical Management on the Field of play.
- Assessment and decision making on continuing play.
- Management of blood injuries, sprains, contusions and hydration of the players.

Medical Screening and Injury Prevention:

- Based on previous injuries and medical history of the player.
- Biomechanical assessment identifying weak links and treatment / rehabilitation programme.
- In season prehabilitation sessions X2 a week, small groups on rotation.
- Individual sessions.

Liaising with Management and Conditioning of the team:

- Introducing players back from injury.
- Reducing volume for players with chronic injuries
- Building preventative exercises into gym routines.
- Fitness to play
- Medical responsibility to the player.

Referral for Scans and Surgery:

- Close links with hospitals and consultants.
- Using only the best surgeons in the region.
- Able to refer at short notice.
- Discussions and joint management of athlete to ensure a quick and safe return to training / playing.

Recovery after matches:

- Cool down and after match stretching.
- Sport massages.
- Hydrotherapy pool sessions.
- Recovery ice-baths or contrast baths after matches.

Psychological Support:

- The player feels isolated when he is injured.
- Players spend a great deal of time in Rehab Centre.
- Long term injured players spend more time with medics than team mates.
- Injured players will talk to medics about things they will not mention to other members of the management team.
- Players know that conversations with the medical staff are confidential.

The overriding objective of the physiotherapist extends beyond the recovery of the player into the broader concepts of restoration of physical health and the prevention of a similar occurrence. The progress made in the player's rehabilitation will often dictate the team selection and performance of the team as a whole.



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