

Patterns of Injury in Male League Sevens Rugby in Zimbabwe

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This study sought to investigate the injury patterns of Zimbabwe male league sevens rugby players. Data was collected prospectively during a 1994 provincial 7s rugby tournament at Hartsfield Grounds, in Bulawayo. An adapted version of the Macnus (2010) instrument was distributed to all players (n = 96) who were injured during the tournament. The players were further interviewed, to corroborate the nature, type, locality, severity and mechanism of injury as responded to from the questionnaire. The study found the incidence of injury to be 14.88 per 1000 playing hours. Further to that, sprains contributed slightly over a quarter (26.7%), abrasions accounted for a fifth (20%), open wounds contributed slightly over a tenth (16.7%) of all the injuries sustained in the tournament. Inflammation and respiratory system problems, concussion and overuse injuries each less than a tenth of all the injuries sustained (6.7% and 3.3%, respectively). The study further found that over three quarters (83%) of the playing positions (PPS) studied suffered sprain injuries, with the full backs incurring most (89%) of the sprains, and the props, hooker, fly-half, and scrum half, each having suffered slightly over a fifth (22.2%) of the same injury. Open wounds and abrasions were each suffered by slightly over two thirds (67%) of the six PPS investigated. Hookers sustained nearly half (44.4%) of open wounds, with props, fly half and scrum half each contributing slightly over a fifth (22.2%) to the same injury. Full backs contributed close to half (44.4%) of the other injuries, with each of the positions prop, hooker and fly half contributing slightly over a fifth (22.2%) of those other injuries. Abrasions were sustained by exactly half (50%) of the PPS investigated, with full backs contributing nearly two thirds (66.6%), hookers contributing almost half (44.4%), and props contributing slightly over a fifth (22.2%) of all abrasions. Inflammation and respiratory diseases were each suffered by nearly a third (30%) of the PPS investigated, with each of hookers and full backs, and hooker and fly half, contributing slightly over a fifth (22.2%) of these two injuries, respectively. Concussion and overuse injuries was sustained by the centres and fly halves only, with each PP contributing slightly over a fifth (22.2%) to the total. The anatomical sites thumb and fingers contributed slightly under a fifth (16.7%) of the total injuries, while the neck, ankle and feet contributed slightly over a tenth of all the injuries, with each anatomical site each contributing 13.3%. The chest accounted for a tenth (10%) of the all the injuries recorded. Slightly over three quarters (76.6%) of the injuries sustained in the tournament were minor in severity, while nearly a quarter (23.4%) were mild. In terms of technique, the tackle contributed close to half (43.3%) of the injuries, while the scrum contributed slightly under a fifth (16.7%), and the ruck, and kick-off each contributed a tenth (10%) of all the injuries incurred. In addition, collision and maul out, and maul and kicking each contributed less than a tenth (6.7% and 3.3% for each pair, respectively).

It is concluded from the study that in in male league sevens rugby in Zimbabwe:

- a) There is a low injury incidence
- b) Sprains, abrasions and open wounds are the injuries frequently suffered
- c) Sprains are experienced by most PPS, especially the full-backs
- d) Open wound and abrasions are incurred by many PPs also, especially hookers and full backs

- e) Full backs contribute nearly half of other injuries besides sprains, abrasions and open wounds f) Inflammation and respiratory diseases are suffered by only a third of the PPs
- f) Concussion and overuse injuries are sustained only by the centres and fly halves only, and contribute a fifth of the injuries
- g) Anatomical sites thumb and fingers, neck, ankle and feet had low (less than 20%) injuries i) No severe injuries are sustained j) the tackle and the scrum contributes to most of the injuries.

The study recommends that even surfaces be used for rugby pitches, that rough play be strictly monitored in rugby matches, that all players (positions) develop high fitness levels and that rugby techniques, especially the tackle and the scrum, be coached with safety in mind, in order to minimise the few, low-severity and relatively infrequent injuries in Zimbabwe male league sevens rugby.

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