

## **The Physiotherapist in Sport**

Anyone who has ever been at a match or has even just seen one on television is familiar with the sight of a downed player being attended to by someone from the side line. 'Who's that?' you may ask. The most likely answer you'll get is 'That's the physio' For most spectators, that one answer explains all. But if you're a manager or trainer or even a player heavily involved in sport you need to know more – a lot more. Knowing who 'the physio' is and what they do can make all the difference between having your top players fit to play the final or not.

If you're involved with the management of a team you may not know exactly what a physio is, except that your players seem to be asking for one and a lot of other teams seem to have one. The sort of questions you're likely to be asking are 'How much does a physio cost? How can I get one? Are there different sorts of physios? Can I get one to come to training sessions and matches?' The one sure answer is that 'physio' will be an added cost for the club. The smaller the club, the greater the relative cost. And no matter what the relative cost it's essential that you get value for your money. If you don't know who's who, who to approach, what to ask for - basically, if you don't know the system you can end up getting bad value for money.

I've been asked these questions many times over the years by managers and trainers of various teams. In this the first of a series of articles designed to highlight the role of the Chartered Physiotherapist in the sporting arena I'll attempt to highlight the most frequently asked questions.

The most basic question is 'what's a physio?' The original 'physios' are Chartered Physiotherapists. They have a approved university degree and are recognised by the Department of Health. They have to belong to a national professional organisation (the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists) and are required to adhere to extremely high standards of continuing education and training. In the treatment of sports injuries the Chartered Physiotherapist is the gold standard. However, there are many people calling themselves 'physios' who have no medical qualifications or approved training at all. They get away with this because, as yet, there's no law preventing anyone calling themselves a physio, as long as they don't claim to be a Chartered Physiotherapist. Thankfully this is set to change but for the moment as manager or trainer it's your responsibility to check that the 'physio' you pay to treat your players is medically qualified to do so. Not only to make sure that you're getting value for your money but also to make sure that you're not putting your players at risk of harm from someone who doesn't know what they're doing. This is especially important for underage players.

So now you know who and what a physiotherapist is. Join me again next week when I discuss the role of the physiotherapist in the team and how to make the most of the physiotherapy services you pay for.

# **The Physiotherapist in Sport**

Welcome back to this the second in a series of three articles looking at the role of the Chartered Physiotherapist in the sporting arena. As I mentioned last week, most people are a bit hazy as to what exactly it is that the sports physio does. Everybody's seen 'the physio' run on pitch with a can of freeze spray and has heard about rubdowns before matches, but is that it? As a manager or trainer who's committed to paying for a physio, it's important that you know exactly what the services available to you are and how to make the most of them.

If you've read the last article you'll know that Chartered Physiotherapists are the original 'physios' and have a recognized medical qualification. When I talk about physios in the following lines, I'll be referring to Chartered Physiotherapists.

So what exactly has a physio to offer your team?

## **Preseason Evaluation**

This involves having the entire team checked out at the beginning of the season. How much detail is gone into depends on the time and the funds available. The basic evaluation will discover existing injuries and basic problems such as poor flexibility or strength that may have persisted after an old injury. More detailed analysis will highlight more subtle problems such as muscle imbalances, foot problems and fitness problems. Preseason evaluation may seem a luxury but it saves precious time later on in the season.

## **Attendance at training sessions**

This is where most players come across the physio. From both the players and the physio's point of view, this is an excellent idea. Players get to know the physio in a non-stressful environment and are therefore more likely to approach him or her with worries or small injuries that they might otherwise have neglected. After all, what's the point of having a physio if the players either don't know how or are reluctant to use the service? From the physio's point of view, getting to know each player's form and response to the demands of training means that problems or injuries can easily be spotted in the early stages and eliminated. The one drawback of attendance at training sessions is that time and space is limited for the treatment of more complex problems.

## **Injury treatment**

Some injuries can't be adequately treated in a clubhouse or dressing room. In these cases, the injured player will need to go to the clinic of the team physio for specific treatment with specialized equipment, such as isokinetic strength testing.

## **Match attendance**

Generally speaking, there isn't a doctor or first aid personnel at most matches. This is especially the case at challenge matches or at underage level. This means that not only does the physio do the normal 'rubs' and ankle strapping, but has to be able and prepared to give emergency first aid, arrange for ambulances and deal with all the cuts and grazes that occur during the match.

This is just a quick synopsis of some of the services that a physio can provide for your team. To hear more about how to make the most of having a physio for your team come along to this seminar 'The Chartered Physiotherapist in Sport' on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8pm (venue to be confirmed later).

**Emilie McGrath, B Physio, MSc Sports Med, MISC P  
Chartered Physiotherapist  
Shannonside Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Clinic  
Main Street, Newmarket on Fergus  
Co Clare  
061 368002k**