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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Injuries in two official football championships, the America Cup 2015 and the Centennial Cup 2016



Blessures dans deux championnats officiels de football, l'America Cup 2015 et la Coupe du Centenaire 2016

1. Introduction

We analyze the injuries sustained during two official male football championships within the CONMEBOL (South America Soccer Confederation), in order to establish the location, diagnosis and severity of the injuries sustained by elite footballers. Both being male-only competitions (the America Cup 2015 and the Centennial Cup 2016). To analyze the lesions, we used data from all the players who took part in the championships. Institutional review board exemption was obtained from the CONMEBOL board.

2. Methods

In total, 515 players actually participated, to a greater or lesser extent, in the two championships. In the two championships, we registered 110 injuries of varying severity, which means that there were 21 injuries in every 1000 minutes of play. If we only take the severe injuries into account, that is, those which required an absence of two weeks or more, the proportion was 9.3 severe injuries for every 1000 minutes of play. One in every 4.7 players was injured; one in every 10.5 had a significant injury: and one in every 42.9 sustained a very serious injury. Over half of all injuries (63 injuries) were a result of contact opposed to 47 in which there was no contact. Regarding the player's position, the players who were injured least were the goalkeepers, while the forwards, midfielders and defenders all had a similar frequency of injury.

3. Results

The injuries varied from one team to another. One national team reported no injury in either competition, while another

reported 42 injuries in the two championships. The other teams had 2 to 9 injuries. Some players sustained two or more injuries in the same match; eight received two different injuries, two had four, one had 6 and another, 12.

Most of the injuries occurred in the last 15 minutes of the first half, that is, after 49 ± 23 minutes, although when the first and second half of the game were compared ($P < 0.43$). Most injuries were to the lower limbs (75 lesions), compared with only 16 in the face and head; 11 in the arms and 7 in the trunk and abdomen. Bruising was the most frequent diagnosis, followed by muscle tears and strains. Most of the injuries did not require the player to miss training or matches (61 lesions), and when they did, the absence was less than one week in most cases (37 cases). In 12 cases more than one week's leave was needed, and 5 players had to be absent for more than three weeks (cranial contusion with a broken nose; one case of rupture of the ACL; one tears of the thigh muscles; one fracture of the posterior wall of the acetabulum, and a fractured elbow caused by collision with a billboard).

Although when we talk of football injuries, trauma always springs to mind first, we should not forget that medical conditions are as frequent or more so, and they also require proper attention. Without forgetting that lesions are sometimes an aspect of football strategy, we consider that some changes should be made to the official questionnaire used by CONMEBOL, which ought to report the diagnosis more accurately in the case of muscle and tendon injuries, and provide details of the caution applied to the player responsible for the injury, where this applies.

4. Conclusion

Football injuries are hard to foresee and prevent. They are very common, and even though serious injuries are rare, it is increasingly necessary to set protocols for action which ensure good medical attention at all levels to address the problems that arise, both during training and in competitions, and to be prepared to treat serious injuries if these occur.

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Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

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