

THE ROLE OF SPORTS MANAGEMENT SKILLS IN THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS INJURIES

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Abstract

This paper looked at the role of sports management skills play in the prevention and management of sports injuries. Sport management is an industrious field concerning the business aspect of sports and recreation, and it involves any combination of skills related to planning, organizing, directing, controlling, budgeting, leading and evaluation within the context of an organization or department. Sports injuries when they occur during sports participation are serious impediments both to the participant and the desired optimum performance level. Sports injuries are injuries sustained during sporting activities. Sports management skills within the context of the paper are; planning, organizing, leading and controlling. The roles these skills play in the prevention and management of sports injuries were highlighted through; planning an athletic programme, identifying, and training and selecting athletes for competition. Common sports injuries in sports are patellofemoral syndrome, shoulder injury, tennis or golf elbow, concussion, groin pull strain, shin splints and sciatica. Others are hamstring strain, ACL tear and hip flexor strain. The aforementioned sports injuries will be highly preventable and managed through well planned and structured sports management skills by trained professionals.

Sports management is an industrious field concerning the business aspect of sports and recreation. Sports management involves any combination of skills related to planning, organizing, directing, controlling, budgeting, leading, and evaluating within the context of an organization or department whose primary product or service is related to sports or physical activity (Desensi, Kelly, Blanton & Beifel, 2003) as cited by Society of Health and Physical Educators (2015). Sports is a big business these days, and it is a fiercely competitive field. While athlete might be top-notch in their chosen sports, it does not mean that they have the time or expertise to negotiate the business and management side of the deal. This means that to achieve their goals and ambitions, professional athletes usually need managers or sports agents to help them on their career path. Sports management renders the services of sports managers to assist to run sports professionally for individual athlete, team and sports organization (Stuart, 2005).

Sports management covers a wide range of areas which includes, front offices, system in professional sports, college sports management, recreational sports management, sports marketing, event management, facility management, sports economics and sports finance, as well as sports information (Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2015). Sports management through its skills can assist in the prevention and management of sports injury, since it had been observed that professional and amateur sports athletes often end up crashing out of competitions and their sporting careers, owing to injuries they sustained. Sports injury is a trauma which requires medical care in an

emergency room, and by their nature, sporting activities invites injuries especially in rigorous sports that need near or maximal contractions and exertions (Smith, 2010). Adams (2008) views injuries as a damage or harm to the human body or an object (material) resulting from an accident or an exposure to unfavourable conditions. Udoh (2000) defines sports injury as a condition where there are physical damages to the body or part of the body as a result of accident sustained during sporting activities.

Smith (2010) was of the opinion that track events which have tremendous numbers of participants in secondary schools, records relatively low injury rate than body contact and team games, and it is hoped that prudent management of athletes by sports manager will assist to prevent sports injuries. The sports management skills are planning, organization, leading and controlling, and the roles of these skills in the prevention and management of sports injuries is what this paper seeks to explore.

Sports Management Skills

The following constitute sports management skills:

Planning: Planning is a management process, concerned with defining goals for company's or athlete future direction and determining on the missions and resources to achieve those targets (www.zapmeta.ng/Top). Planning (also called forethought) is the process of thinking about and organizing the activities required to achieve a desired goal. It involves creation and maintenance of a plan, such as psychological aspects that requires conceptual skills. There are even a couple of tests to measure someone's capability of planning well. As such, planning is a fundamental property of intelligent behavior (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/planning>).

Also planning has a specific process and is necessary for multiple occupations (particularly in fields such as management, business, etc). In sports management the sports manager plans his strategies into short and long range practices to enable him or her to achieve the desired goals. He plans effectively to reduce unnecessary details and time (Austin, 2013).

Organizing: Organizing is a systematic process of structuring, integrating, co-ordinating task goals, and activities to resources in order to attain objectives (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/organizing>). The organizing function is carried out once a plan, or an outline for how to achieve some organizational goal, is in place. Many believe organizing is the most critical of managerial functions because of its ability to help or hinder athletic plans. Think about any team sports and how important organizing is to the success of the sports manager. A sports manager will spend countless of hours planning various plays and formulating strategies to beat the opponent. However, those play and strategies are only as effective as how well the coach organizes various players on the team, each with his or her own set of talents and abilities (Hartzell, 2015).

Organizing, much like planning is a process that must be meticulously designed and executed. The end result of the organizing process is the organizational structure, which refers to the type of framework a company uses to distinguish power and authority, roles and responsibilities, and the manner in which information flows through the organization (Hartzell, 2015).

Leading: Leading as a function of management involves a manager spending time connecting with his or her employees on an interpersonal level. This goes beyond simply managing tasks, rather, it involves communicating openly with athletes, motivating athletes towards high level of productivity, inspiring athletes to be creative and innovative, and encouraging them to achieve their goals. Not all managers are leaders, but to be very successful, sports manager must be a good leader. A successful

leader inspires followers, increases morale, and encourages effective communication between athletes and team (Hartzell, 2015).

Controlling: Controlling in management involves comparing actual performance to expected performance. The controlling process involves;

- establishing standards to measure performance;
- measuring actual performance;
- comparing performance with the standard taking corrective action.

The controlling process is a simply a set of steps a manager uses to determine whether set goals have been met (Hartzell, 2015).

Common sports injuries

There are different types of sports injuries and their occurrence differs per sports. According to Unity Point Health (2015), the top ten most common sports injuries are as follows:

Patellofemoral syndrome: About 55% of all sports injuries are knee injuries. Knee injuries also make up 25% of problems treated by orthopedic surgeons. Knee injuries or patellofemoral syndrome, is caused by the kneecap repeatedly moving against the leg bone. This movement damages the kneecap's tissues and causes pain. Basketball, cycling, swimming, football, volleyball and running are the most common sports where these injuries occur;

Shoulder injury: Shoulder injuries, including dislocations, sprains and strains, make up 20% of all sports that require overhead movement, like tennis, swimming, weightlifting, baseball, basketball, and volleyball, are the most common culprits. Shoulder injuries should be treated with rest, ice, and anti-inflammatory medication;

Tennis or golf elbow: Around 7% of all sports injuries are elbow injuries. Also called epicondylitis, tennis elbow is caused by a repetitive use of the elbow. This repetition creates tiny tears in the elbow's ligaments. Pain can be experienced on the inside or outside of the elbow, but the outside is the most common and the condition happens in 30 - to 60 year – olds.

Concussion: Concussion is a traumatic brain injury that alters the way brain works. Effects are usually temporary but can include headaches and problems with concentration, memory, balance and coordination. Although they are usually caused by a blow to the head, they can also occur when the head and upper body are violently shaken. These injuries can cause a loss of consciousness, but most concussions do not. Because of this, some people have concussions and don't realize it (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2016).

Groin Pull/Strain: A groin strain is a tear of one or more of the adductor muscles. Groin strains are a common injury in hockey and skiing, as well as sports like football and track and field that require running or jumping. They can range from grade 1, which is a mild injury with few symptoms and a short recovering time, to grade 3, which is a complete or nearly complete tear of a groin muscle (Teens Health, 2016).

Shin splints: Shin splints are known for shooting pain down the front of the leg. While it happens most often to runners, shin splints can also occur in people who are not used to exercising or who have increased their exercise intensity too quickly. Sometimes, shin splints can be a result of a stress fracture in the bone (Unity Point Health, 2015).

Sciatica: Sciatica which is lower-back pain that reaches down the legs, can affect athletes who participate in cycling, running, golf, tennis and baseball. Bulging discs and back spasms are other types of lower-back pain that athletes often endure (Unity Point Health, 2015).

Hamstring strain: A strain is a muscle or tendon injury. There are three muscles behind the knee that make up the hamstring. They are most often “pulled” when an athlete is overusing or overstretching the muscle. The pain is caused by tears in the muscles or tendons. Sometimes bruising can occur in pulled hamstring. Activities like hurdling or falling forward while waterskiing are all common causes of a hamstring strain (Unity Point Health, 2015).

ACL tear: The ACL or anterior cruciate ligament connects the bone to the knee. The act of suddenly stopping and changing directions or a hard impact to the side of the knee can cause a strain or a hard impact to the side of the knee can cause a strain or tear of the ACL. These are one of the most severe sports injuries, but not the most common. A completely torn ligament requires surgery and may cut an athlete’s career short (Unity Point Health, 2015).

Hip flexor strain: The hip flexor is a group of muscles that assist with the upward movement of the leg or knee. An injury occurs when these muscles are torn or stretched too far. This can occur from having weak muscles, forgetting to warm up, having stiff muscles, or from a fall. Sudden upward movements or change in direction also causes the problems (Unity Point Health, 2015).

Causes of sports injuries

Sports injuries are most commonly caused by the following:

- Poor training methods
- Structural abnormalities
- Weakness in muscles, tendons and ligaments
- Unsafe exercising environments
- Overuse
- Overtraining (canoe.com, 2016)

Other causes of sports injuries according to Mair (2014) are:

- Stops and twists
- Falls
- Improper equipment
- New or increased activity
- Fatigue
- Poor warm up
- Impact
- Unilateral movements
- Technique or posture

The Needed Skills for Jobs in Sports Management for the Prevention and Management of Sports Injuries

The needed skills for jobs in sports management according to Keller (2003) and Kimball (2009) are as follows:

People skills: Including working with people with diverse background in a varieties of professional and causal settings. They work with athletes, agents, scouts, coaches, the media professionals in setting ranging from hospital to locker rooms to press events to galas.

Teamwork: Sports is about teamwork at every level of the game. The main goal for sports managers is to help individuals play as a team, while they keep their clients’ interest top of their minds, for it

best serves athletes to be part of the game. Sports managers themselves work as part of a team. With the help of coaches, trainers and sponsors, they are unit of professionals with a common goal; to get the best for and out of athlete;

Communication skills: Sports managers must be able to explain decisions and strategies, interact with a myriad of sports professions and actively listen to the needs of their organization. Sports managers should be able to communicate through writing as well as sourcing for sponsor and fund in case of injury management;

Decision: Sometimes, leading means deciding. That applies to all applied management positions, not just to sports managers. Sports managers need to be able to make tough decisions and stick to them, especially in high visibility positions. Decisions often need to be made quickly in this field, so sports managers need to be confident in their ability to weigh pros and cons in a timely fashion;

Organizational skills: This includes the ability to multi-task, keep records, manage a calendar and plan things out in advance. Sports managers may need to juggle many clients and teams. As ability to make the most effective use of one's time is an essential skills to preventing and management of sports injuries; and

Strong value system: As current events in sports management have shown, the sports industry is arguable plagued with a lack of sound judgment. Sports managers who have a strong ethical commitment to their field avoid scandal and detriments to their careers. While the temptation toward corruption can be great, it usually does not pay off in the end.

Prevention and Management of Sports Injuries through Sports Management Skills

Sports management skills will assist to prevent and manage sports injuries through the following ways:

Planning in athletic programme: Planning an athletic programme is a very crucial in any athletic programme. Sports management skills are very important in the beginning of any sports training. This requires a long-range programme in form of training schedule, where athletes are sequentially and logically programmed through, from conditioning, pre-season into in-season. These three conditioning programmes will assist to prevent and manage sports injuries, when they are well carried out by the coach or trainer. When injuries occur, athletes are advised to rest a while, and are referred to a physician if very severe (Ojeme, 2000).

Identifying: Sports management skills assist to identify athletes' problems and what events or sports they are likely to excel. Sports managers tries to identify athletes areas of weakness, so as to remove and improve on them. They also identify psychological fears and stress among athletes and build them to conquer any hindrance. By so doing, by directing athletes, injuries are prevented, and when they occur, therapeutic measures are addressed. The fear of the unknown may predispose athletes to injuries and sports management skills assist to address this issue through better organization of athlete's welfare (Okun, 2010).

Training and selecting athletes for competition: It is the duty of the coach to train and select athletes for competition. Research had shown that with the help of sports management skills, there had been great improvement in athletes' performance in recent times. Sports management skills when embedded into training programmes, reduce and prevent sports injuries in rigorous sports. It is expected that most trained coaches and trainers must have written and passed some compulsory sports management courses during their bachelor's degree and coaching programme, where these skills were taught them (Adams, 2008).

Summary and Conclusion

Sports management skills are planning, organizing, leading and controlling. Planning involves thinking about activities that are required to achieve a desired goal. Organizing is a systematic process of structuring, integrating, co-ordinating task goals, and activities to resources in order to attain objectives. Leading involves spending time connecting with people on an interpersonal level, while directing them, while controlling involves comparing actual performance to expected performance. Sports injuries are injuries sustained by athletes during sports participation. Injuries in sports is prevalent in most sports, but more in competitive sports at professional level, especially in contact and rigorous sports that demands explosive exertion of strength and power. Due to the high rate of sports injuries among elite athletes. This paper looked at the role of sports management skills in the prevention and management of sports injuries, and these roles were highlighted through; planning an athletic programme, identifying, training and selecting athletes for competition.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were suggested for the paper:

1. Sports management courses should be intensified in degree and coaching programmes;
2. Sports manager's expertise should be sought and utilized by sports practitioners to prevent and manage sports injuries;
3. Ministry of education should employ the services of qualified sports managers in their sports department;
4. Sports managers should be employed as directors of sports in sports council/commissions;
5. Sports injuries prevention and management should involve the co-operation of all sports practitioners;
6. At the professional level of sports the absence of sports managers should be discouraged.

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