Reviewer's report

Title: A survey of referee participation, training and injury in elite gaelic games referees

Version: 1 Date: 20 January 2009

Reviewer: Carlo Castagna

Reviewer's report:

General comment

In this interesting study the authors addressed the commitment to refereeing and training in elite level Gaelic referees to establish for the first time sports injury prevalence in these officials. Although the authors used a retrospective design they were able to report a number of information that in my opinion are extremely useful to understand the exact nature of a sport activity such as Gaelic Sports refereeing. Indeed the paper showed that refereeing should be regarded as a unique sport activity in term of injury occurrence and participation background. This would result helpful in promoting the interest of researches in this often overlooked area of investigation: team-sports refereeing injury prevention.

Surprisingly the authors showed that although GS refereeing is a non professional activity referees are appointed almost at a professional rate as the referee reported 3-6 game per weeks. Furthermore the GS referees reported to undertake frequent (3 or more days per week) training sessions during the week in the attempt to develop fitness for purpose. The paper is well written and possess a good flow. The discussion is consistent with the results reported and the authors stated their study limitations properly. In order to improve the paper quality I would suggest authors to develop if possible a paragraph addressing future studies. Also can they give some practical suggestions in order to guide injury occurrence reduction?

Specific Comments
- Major Compulsory Revisions

I have noticed that the age span of the GS referees is very wide ranging from 28 to 55 years. That is quite higher than that I usually observe in elite level soccer referees. I am wondering if the authors may develop a reasoning or introduce their data through an age perspective to explain the high injury rate noticed.

In the “Results” section the authors reported a statement of significance in differences. Anyway they did not provide in the “Statistical analysis” the way they achieved that and the level of significance used.
Injury definition

I would suggest the authors to create a rationale for the definition they used for injury.

Questionnaire

I would suggest the authors to provide if possible more details about the validation of their questionnaire.

Results discussion

Any relationship between activity (training/refereeing) commitment and injury rate?

I would suggest authors to take into consideration the average age of the GS referees in order to develop their reasoning about injury occurrence.

- Minor Essential Revisions

In “subjects recruitment” please fully explain GAA as that was its first citation.

- Discretionary Revisions

What were the professions undertaken by GS referees in order to allow them such a free time for their sport commitments?

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