

Transcript

Injury rehab in rugby: keeping it personal with devices and data

ALEX SANDERSON:

We pride ourselves here at Saracens about looking for new ways to get an edge and if sport science is one avenue, then we'll explore that avenue. The players are the resource. So the rehabilitation, and injury prevention, of our best players and all our players is paramount to our success over a 10- 11-month season. And for that, we have one-to-one rehabilitation.

We've got guys that see them through every step of the way. And our players actually come back, I'm proud to say, stronger, better, physically better specimens than when they were injured because of the amount of resources and energy and time we put into the rehab of players. And part of that is technology

JOE COLLINS:

Rugby is an extremely progressive sport. It marries innovation with the art of coaching and science extremely well. And that's versus any other sport I've seen. I came from professional football and Olympic sports to rugby union. And actually, I was very surprised about how advanced the sport was really in terms of screening, monitoring, injury prevention, load management, the use of GPS, essentially the holistic management of a pro rugby player.

The aim of the game for us really is to balance innovation with doing the basics incredibly well. We're definitely an analytics-based club. So we use stats and information gathering on a whole variety of different parameters on the players, so their wellness, their recovery, their readiness to train and play. And then, balance that with the art of knowing the player, how readily they are in themselves really to get back on the pitch. So there's a whole degree of information collection that we have here.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

TOM SHERRIFF:

This is a GPS receiver, and the high rate receiver picks up all the information from the equipment the lads are wearing. They've got 30 GPS units, and they're the ones they wear in the bra tops. They sit in between the shoulder blades. And they transmit information about around distance and speed. And these days you can pick up accelerations, impacts, tackles, and change of direction. So it's a sort of mechanical load. And they've all got the heart rate straps that they wear under their shirt.

In session, we'll just look at how much time they spend above 85% of their max heart rate. If you want to get conditioning element out of it, or if you want to keep it low intensity, make sure that it's below that threshold. So that all comes in real time to the laptop.

The guys who've been here a while, they've got four, five years worth of data. So we can start seeing if there's any trend as, you know, if they do pick up an injury, is it related to any sort of common features of how we've loaded them? And try and avoid that in the future.

JACQUES BURGER:

The game of rugby is it brutal on the body I think. It kind of feels like you've been in a car accident every weekend. Like your body is just wrecked for two days after. And I think the way we are looked after scientifically and how the game has evolved itself, it's incredible. And I think it's something that has really helped me in my professional career.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

TOM SHERRIFF:

It used to be can they sprint? And can they cover 4k? But a lot of people can do that and can't play half of rugby. So it's how you get that 4k or how you get that speed, And how many times you get that speed, which is where we're at now. So it's a very individual process.

PAUL GUSTARD:

Because of the sport size, because of GPS, because of heart rate monitors we can measure them more accurately in terms of what they're actually putting their body through. We now recognize that it's not just what you do training-wise. It's the rest, it's the recovery, it's the nutrition, it's the sleep. These things that weren't really spoken about 15, 20 years ago. We thought more is good, more is good, more is good. We now understand less is more. The boys actually train way less, but they're bigger, faster, stronger, heavier, and more powerful.

[MUSIC PLAYING]