

Concussion and the Sports Trainer

SWSAS Policy Statement:

A concussed athlete requires medical assessment. It is not within the scope of a trainer's role to make decisions regarding the management and/or the return to play criteria for such an individual. Serious and potentially fatal conditions may mimic concussion and require accurate medical and neurological examination.

The increasing prospects of litigation against trainers should deter those who attempt to provide a medical rather than a first aid assessment of an injured player.

Symptoms which may alert a trainer to the diagnosis of concussion include confusion, memory loss, in coordination, blurred vision, headache, loss of balance and loss of consciousness. There is no single test or examination technique which can establish the diagnosis accurately. No player showing any symptoms of concussion or head injury should be playing or training.

A "safety first" policy should be adhered to in this matter. A player whom a trainer suspects has been concussed, needs urgent medical assessment. If the player is unconscious, then he should be managed according to conventional first aid principles and transported by ambulance to hospital. Due regard for potential spinal injury needs to be taken. If a player is conscious and there is no medical practitioner at that venue to manage the patient, then the concussed player should be transported to the nearest medical center (eg. An Accident and Emergency Department of a hospital) for medical review as soon as possible.

All concussed players require a medical clearance before consideration of returning to play, regardless of the timing of that injury.
