



HEALTHY SHOULDERS ESSENTIAL TO GOALKEEPERS' OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE

By Mark J. Triffon, M.D.

Although not as frequent as lower extremity injuries, soccer players occasionally suffer upper extremity injuries, such as clavicle fractures, wrist fractures, A-C joint separations (shoulder separations) and finger injuries during match play.

Shoulder injuries on the soccer field most often occur among goalkeepers as they often throw the ball great distances.

Understanding the Anatomy of the Shoulder

The shoulder joint is extremely complex. The clavicle, scapula (shoulder blade), humerus (upper arm) and sternum (breast bone) comprise the shoulder mechanism. Strong ligaments connect the shoulder joint to the body. There are four muscles of the rotator cuff. Other large muscles cross the shoulder joint, including the biceps, triceps, pectorals, deltoid and trapezius muscles. Shoulder injuries that occur during soccer usually stem from traumatic injury, overuse or poor technique.

Common Injuries of the Shoulder

A-C Joint Separation (shoulder separation): Shoulder separation usually occurs when a soccer player falls directly on the top of the shoulder or slides into another player. Four ligaments hold the clavicle in proper position. The more ligaments injured, the worse the injury. Recovery consists of rest, ice, anti-inflammatory medications and physical therapy.

Shoulder Dislocation: Dislocation occurs from high energy direct trauma. The shoulder is a "ball and socket" joint. When the "ball" pops out of the "socket," a dislocation has occurred. Typically, the shoulder is reduced (put back into its socket) on the field or in the emergency room. Recovery consists of immobilization for three weeks followed by gradual range of motion and strengthening.

Muscle Strain: Inadequate or poor conditioning can lead to overuse or a muscle strain injury. Treatment for a shoulder injury consists of ice, anti-inflammatory medications and physical therapy.

Injury Prevention

Soccer players can help prevent shoulder injuries by adopting proper warm up, strengthening and conditioning techniques. Using zero or one pound weight full range of motion exercises can help



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strengthen the shoulder and rotator cuff. These exercises will help prevent injury and should be part of an athlete's conditioning program.

Fortunately, shoulder injuries are less common among soccer players than other athletes. Ask your trainer, coach or team physician for proper conditioning and warm-up techniques to help prevent injury and maintain your peak performance.

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