

# **Tackles, Tears and Troubles.... a South African Sports Medicine Association perspective**

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None

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## **Rugby Returns**

Rugby Sevens returns to the Olympics this August after an absence of over 90 years. South African Seabelo Senatla, pictured on the cover of this edition, is one of a number of international Rugby Sevens players with poetic-sounding names. Akira Ioane (New Zealand), Nathan Hirayama (Canada), Collins Injera (Kenya) and Savenaca Rawaca (Fiji) have titles of similar allure for rugby commentators. The truly international reach, fast pace and tempo of the sport are likely to do justice to the Olympic mantra of “*Citius, Altius, Fortius*”, but the debates surrounding the risks of collision sport, the discussions around injury epidemiology and prevention and the ubiquitous grey cloud of doping are unlikely to evaporate in the midst of Olympic euphoria. This SASMA-led BJSM edition scrutinises these aspects of sport.

## **Tackles...**

The contentious call by a group of UK-based “health experts” for a ban on tackling in schools rugby (1) has provoked much print and social media

comment (2), both official (3,4) and provocative (5) but none more measured than Ross Tucker's paper which carefully analyses the data in a global sporting and scientific context. Ross illustrates how assessment, estimation and evaluation of risk should precede policy implementation. Banning tackling at youth level may actually have detrimental effects for the sport. Read why.

An emerging theme in SEM literature, and collision sport in particular, has been that of injury prevention. With the tackle identified as the main area of risk, emerging South African rugby researchers Nick Burger and Sharief Hendricks fly the BokSmart flag for us. They lead a cohort illustrating the importance contact skill training and the correct technique being employed in tackling based on technical and video footage criteria developed by Gabbett (6). The tackle is, of course, also strongly associated with concussion in rugby. Bath's prodigious rugby researcher, Keith Stokes, illustrates how return to play in the same season after a diagnosed concussion is associated with a 60% increased risk of *any* time loss injury. A re-evaluation of GRTP protocols and post-concussion rehabilitation incorporating proprioception, neuromuscular control and co-ordination may be appropriate. Berlin attendees take note!

### **Tears (...and Teslas)**

A recurrent ACL tear must be one of the most despondent scenarios faced by an athlete (and the medical team). Polyvios Kyritis leads Erik Witvrouw's Qatar group in eloquently outlining 6 key discharge criteria for mitigating re-rupture risk. These are key findings for rehabilitation therapists who would do well to print out the accompanying infographic (infographic nr 095908). This paper is worthy of broader access as an Editor's Choice. In a similar vein, Nirav Maniar illustrates how isometric strength, passive straight leg raise and dynamic strength measures can be used to guide return-to-play after hamstring tears. And from Wei Dong, a look at tennis elbow "tears". Who hasn't been tempted to opt for the "quick fix" option of a corticosteroid infiltration? But read this thorough systematic review which tells us what really works amongst the injection options available for lateral epicondylopathy?

Today most would associate the term “Tesla” with South African-born disruptor and billionaire Elon Musk’s electronic car company. But the “T” more pertinent to musculoskeletal radiology is the unit of magnetic flux density applied to MRI machines. In two editorials Guermazi and Roemer asks the pertinent question “How often has 3T changed my treatment decision compared to 1,5T?”, and then outline the uses for T2 mapping and compositional MRI for diagnosing articular cartilage damage.

### **... and Trouble**

What would a Games be without a doping scandle? Will Meldonium, that well described first-line therapy for diabetes(!) raise its head? (BTW, @dnunan79 wrote two excellent BJSM blogs on the topic (7)). But what if the doping was unintentional? Prof Chan’s editorial provides timely advice on avoiding doping trouble, commenting on research into psychological, social and educational variables.

### **Proudly South African**

Rounding off the South African contributors to this edition is a paper from Martin Schweltnus’ SAFER study highlighting the high incidence of acute illness in competing endurance runners and the benefits of pre-race medical screening. Martin is a stalwart of South African sports and exercise medicine and has recently taken on the position of director of the Institute for Sport, Exercise Medicine and Lifestyle Research, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria. Whilst enjoying the poetic rhythm of the Sevens Rugby Olympians, look out for some excellent work from this clinical and research group as South African sports clinicians continue to tackle issues, prevent tears and avoid trouble!

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