

INJURIES AND INCIDENTS IN ICELANDIC SOCCER – MATCH ANALYSIS

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Introduction: Although previous studies have shown a consistently high injury rate in soccer, little is known about the mechanisms of injury. The aim of the present study was to identify high-risk situations in soccer based on video recordings of incidents recorded prospectively.

Methods: Soccer players from nine of ten soccer teams in the Icelandic elite soccer league participated in the study. During the 1999 season, videotapes from 79 matches were available at the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service - Television. The tapes were reviewed, and an incident was recorded when the match was interrupted by the referee because of an expected injury, a player lay down for more than 15 s, and the player appeared to be in pain. Of the 102 incidents recorded, 30 resulted in injuries, i.e. the player was forced to leave the field or could not participate in match or practice the following day. Injuries were prospectively recorded by the team physical therapist. The incidents and the events leading up to them were analyzed by match analysis, a research tool developed to describe the team events in soccer, e.g. attacking, defending, and aspects related to the effectiveness of play.

Results: Of the 102 incidents, 56 occurred when attacking and 46 when defending. Ninety-one incidents occurred in duels, mostly in tackling duels (n=55), and when the exposed player did not have his full attention fully on the playing situation (n=49). The most common high-risk situations were: 1) Break-down attacks, player attention on the ball, tackled from the side (n=22); and 2) Defense, tackling duel, attention on ball or poor technique (n=21).

Conclusion: Match analysis can be an important tool to identify high-risk situations in soccer, information which is essential in order to suggest prevention strategies.