

Saskatoon Lions Speed Skating Club
Return to play guidelines following head injuries
March 2016

The Saskatoon Lions Speed Skating Club (SLSSC) is committed to providing a safe environment to athletes and ensuring that athletes are ready to return to training and competition following a head injury. The following guidelines have been adapted from the Speed Skating Canada Return to Play Guideline. Our intent is to provide tools for parents, athletes and coaches to assess the safety and timing of return to play.

Concussion definition

A concussion is an alteration in the normal function of the brain induced by trauma either by a direct blow, or by rotational forces that result in a rapid acceleration/deceleration of the brain within the skull. Symptoms of a concussion include nausea, poor concentration, fatigue, amnesia, irritability, sensitivity to light or noise, poor appetite, and decreased memory. Concussion can be difficult to recognize as some athletes may not complain of some of these symptoms. Loss of consciousness is not required to have a concussion, and in fact most athletes do not lose consciousness. ¹

Recognition of Concussion

Any athlete suffering a head injury should be assessed immediately for symptoms of concussion. The Pocket CONCUSSION RECOGNITION TOOL² can be used by non-medical personnel to assist in recognition. Concussion should be suspected following a blow to the head or a rotational force (ie blow to jaw, fast fall) resulting in any of:

1. visible clues- loss of consciousness, seizure, lying motionless, balance concerns, grabbing/clutching head, dazed or vacant look, confusion
2. Signs or symptoms- nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, more emotional or irritable, sadness, memory concerns, nervous or anxious, headache, dizziness, confusion, feeling slowed down, 'pressure in head', 'don't feel right', blurred vision, neck pain, sensitivity to light or sound, difficulty concentrating
3. Memory function- ask these questions:
'where are we?'
'is it before or after lunch?'
'what did you have last lesson/class?'
'who is your teacher?'

Any athlete with concussion symptoms should be identified by a coach, official, therapist or doctor on site. It is particularly important to be vigilant after any fall or accident. If an athlete does not demonstrate or indicate symptoms, but a fall or other incident provides reason to suspect a concussion, the athlete should be assessed by medical personnel on site (if available) or using the Concussion Recognition Tool(CRT) before the athlete participates in any further

¹ Speed Skating Canada Return to Play Guide

² Pocket CONCUSSION RECOGNITION TOOL bjsm.bmj.com/content/47/5/267.full.pdf

activity. **In competition, officials who suspect an athlete has been concussed may require clearance from the on-site medical personnel before allowing an athlete to participate in an event.**³

If an assessment confirms the presence of ANY sign or symptom of a concussion, the athlete must be removed from all activity and undergo a medical evaluation by a physician. An athlete who has sustained a concussion should NOT return to speed skating competition and training, dryland or cross-training, or any other physical exercise until provided with written clearance by a physician.⁴

Emergency Management

If any of the following are reported a player should be safely and immediately removed from the field. If no qualified medical professional is available, consider transporting by ambulance for urgent medical assessment.

- neck pain
- increasing confusion or irritability
- repeated vomiting
- seizure
- weakness or tingling/burning in arms or legs
- deteriorating consciousness
- severe or increasing headache
- unusual behaviour change
- double vision

*Taken from Pocket CONCUSSION RECOGNITION TOOL

Initial management of concussion and return to play

The athlete should not be left alone in the first few hours. The initial treatment is rest until the complete resolution of symptoms. Resting includes both physical and cognitive (or mental) rest. Athletes should therefore have a quiet environment and avoid excessive exposure to auditory or visual stimulation such as television, computer work, video games, cellphones, books, or text messaging.

Athletes should avoid alcohol and medication use after concussion. Some analgesics (pain-killers) and anti-inflammatories should only be taken if prescribed by a physician as they may mask some of the signs and symptoms of concussion. Medical evaluation will decide whether any other acute investigations such as CT or MRI scans are warranted.

Speed Skating Canada's Return to Speed Skating Protocol can begin once the athlete has been free of all symptoms for 24-48 hours and written clearance has been provided by a physician. The physician's clearance should confirm the use of the Return to Speed Skating Protocol and

³ Speed Skating Canada Return to Play Guide

⁴ Speed Skating Canada Return to Play Guide

identify any special considerations based on the specific case including the athlete's previous concussion history.⁵

RETURN TO SPEED SKATING PROTOCOL (Speed Skating Canada)

The following protocol presents a suggested step-by-step protocol for return to full training and competition in short track or long track speed skating. Each step in the Return to Play protocol requires a minimum of one day. However, each step of the protocol may be extended depending on the athlete's prior concussion history, severity and duration of current concussion symptoms, degree of compliance to the protocol, facility availability, and age. For example, each step could be two days instead of one day. A physician-parent cannot not act as his or her child's treating physician.

If an athlete develops any concussion symptoms (e.g., headache, feeling sick), during the activity of a step of the protocol, later the same day or the following day the athlete should stop the protocol immediately and return to Step 1 (a reassessment by a physician). **Written medical clearance from a physician is required prior to steps 2 and 8.**

STEP 1

Complete Cognitive And Physical Rest

Limit school, work and tasks requiring concentration. Refrain from physical activity until symptoms are gone. Once all symptoms are gone, rest for at least another 24-48 hours and consult a physician, preferably one with experience managing concussion, for clearance to proceed to Step 2.

STEP 2

Light Aerobic exercise to reintroduce physical activity: 10-15 minutes of low intensity cycling on a stationary bike.

STEP 3

30 minutes of cycling on a stationary bike at 75% of Max Heart Rate.

STEP 4

30 minutes of cycling on a stationary bike at 75% of Max Heart Rate with 30 second maximum effort intervals at minutes 10, 15, and 20.

STEP 5

Sport specific aerobic activity and re-introduction of skating: 15 minutes of low intensity skating. If the facility permits, short track athletes should start with long track skating.

The environment should be managed so as to ensure the athlete is not in excessive traffic and that there is minimum risk of falling or colliding with other athletes. The athlete may also attempt basic balance drills, such as gliding in basic position on one leg. If the athlete only has access to a short track facility, he or she should skate around the outside, close to the boards with no traffic on the inside.

STEP 6

⁵ Speed Skating Canada Return to Play Guide

30 minutes of skating at 75% of Max Heart Rate with 30 second maximum effort intervals at minutes 10, 15, and 20.

STEP 7

Regular off-ice warm-up with high intensity off-ice agility/ coordination activities and monitored high intensity off-ice and on-ice workout. (See appendix 1 Speed Skate Canada Return to Play Guide)

STEP 8

FULL ON-ICE PRACTICE including skating in traffic, tactical drills, starts and race simulations **once cleared by a physician.**

STEP 9

Return to unrestricted practice and competition.

Clearance for Return to Play

Any athlete suffering a concussion will require clearance from their physician to return to play. At least 2 visits will be required. The first visit is to clear the athlete for step 2- light activity. A final visit will be required to clear the athlete for step 8. Assessment of symptoms is most easily accomplished by a concussion management team (ie physiotherapists and physicians with experience in concussion management).

**Saskatoon Lions Speed Skating Club
Return to Play Clearance form
Group 3 and 4 skaters**

Athlete's name:

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YY):

Coach:

Concussion management team members (ie physician, physiotherapist):

Date of Injury:

Dear physician,

Saskatoon Lions Speed Skating Club (SLSSC) is requesting your assessment of _____
(athlete) to determine their readiness to return to training and competition.

Athletes within our club follow the Speed Skate Canada Return to Play Guide stepwise protocol for returning to training and competition.

STEP 1

Complete Cognitive And Physical Rest

Limit school, work and tasks requiring concentration. Refrain from physical activity until symptoms are gone. Once all symptoms are gone, rest for at least another 24-48 hours and consult a physician, preferably one with experience managing concussion, for clearance to proceed to Step 2.

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STEP 9

Return to unrestricted practice and competition.

We require a minimum of 2 physicians assessments and points of clearance. The athlete must be seen before he/she can progress to stage 2 (light activity) and again prior to progression to Step 8. Although not mandatory, the involvement of a concussion management team with supervised progression provides reassurance that trained professionals with experience in concussed athletes are monitoring the athlete for recurrence of symptoms and safety to progress. Please attach any documentation from such a team to this form.

Visit one:

_____ (athlete) has been cleared to progress to STEP 2 of the return to play protocol.

_____ (signature) _____ (MM/DD/YY)

Visit two:

_____ (athlete) has successfully completed STEPS 2-7 without recurrence of symptoms and may progress to STEP 8.

_____ (signature) _____ (MM/DD/YY)

**Saskatoon Lions Speed Skating Club
Return to Play Clearance form
Group 1 and 2 skaters**

Athlete's name:

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YY):

Coach:

Concussion management team members (ie physician, physiotherapist):

Date of Injury:

Dear physician,

Saskatoon Lions Speed Skating Club (SLSSC) is requesting your assessment of _____
(athlete) to determine their readiness to return to training and competition.

Young athletes in our club are encouraged to follow guidelines for return to school and play as outlined in the child- SCAT concussion tool. The athlete must be asymptomatic for 24-48 hours before progressing to the next step and should return to a step below if symptoms recur. If persistent symptoms are present beyond 10 days please revisit with a health professional and consider involving a concussion management team. We have suggested some sport specific modifications within the protocol.

STEP ONE

No activity. Encourage cognitive and physical rest.

STEP TWO

Light aerobic activity such as walking, swimming or stationary cycling, keeping heart rate at 70% intensity and no resistance training.

STEP THREE

Sport specific light exercise. Return to light skating and drills. (Dryland sessions could be included here. The skater should be encouraged to stay near the boards out of traffic and keep the speed low. When possible return to long track first)

STEP FOUR

Progression to more complex drills and increasing intensity. May re-introduce resistance training. (Dryland sessions would be appropriate here as well)

STEP FIVE

Return to normal practice.

STEP SIX

Return to competition.

Athletes should ideally be assessed before step 3 and 6 depending on the level of the skater and clinical judgement.

Comments:

_____ (athlete) has been assessed and has been cleared to proceed to STEP 3 .

Date_____

Signature_____

_____ (athlete) has been assessed and has been cleared to proceed to STEP 6

Date_____

Signature_____