

## Rugby injury incidence in semi-rural University team

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### Abstract

Rugby Union is a very important international sport, while in South Africa it played an important part in unifying racial groups in the country during challenging political times, making it the second most popular sport in South Africa. It is contact sport and due to the nature of the sport, players experience high injury incidences. Rugby players in rural areas might experience unique challenges and risk of injury. Rugby injury incidence in rural areas has not been well researched and it is unclear if rural based teams in South Africa are at increased risk of injury. Aim: The aim of this study was to determine the overall injury incidence of the male senior rugby team at the University of Zululand during the competitive part of the 2019 season and to compare the injury incidence between matches and training. Methods: This study used a purposive, quantitative design which included 30 rugby players from the University of Zululand's first team and collected training and match injury data during the competitive phase of the season. Injuries were expressed relative to exposure as number of injuries per 1000 hours of exposure. Results: a total of 52 injuries were recorded over a period of 5 months which included training and matches. The overall injury incidence was 22.9 injuries per 1000 hours of play. Most injuries occurred during matches - especially during the first period of the competitive season, whilst training injury incidence increased during the last and most competitive part of the season. Conclusion: As expected, injury incidence during matches were significantly higher than during training. Training injury incidence increased unexpectedly in the periods preceding the most important matches. The overall injury incidence was higher than expected. It is difficult to determine the exact reason why injuries were greater when compared to other relevant studies, but a possibility could be lack of rehabilitation, a smaller pool of reserve players, means of coaching and conditioning, incomplete recovery leading to residual fatigue, or how injured players are managed to prevent re-injury. Further research is indicated to determine if rural teams follow scientific training programmes based on correct principles of periodization, rest and recovery, especially close to important matches at the end of season and if players carrying injury are managed correctly throughout the year.

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