Preface

Return to Play Following Musculoskeletal Injury

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Editor

It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up.

—Vince Lombardi

In my professional life, I have experienced few things as challenging or rewarding as taking care of athletes. From youth and recreational participants to professional and Olympic athletes, those competing at all levels of sport expect the highest levels of performance and continually push the envelope of care. They force those who care for them to continually challenge the conventional wisdom and advance diagnostic and treatment timelines and protocols. The advances seen with the treatment of high-level athletes has a “trickle-down” effect on the care of weekend warriors. And while the management of these populations is different, the entire field is propelled by these advances, all born out of the drive to return to play. I have learned so much from my patients and continue to do so.

Central to caring for athletes is the concept of “return to play.” Athletes need and want to know about the long-term ramifications of their injury and treatment decisions. However, the first question is ALWAYS, “Doc, when can I play again?” With some injuries, there is substantial literature to help guide clinicians in making this prognosis; however, some injuries and conditions present challenges due to sparse published reports. Many surgical outcomes studies comprise combined athlete and nonathlete populations and focus on patient-reported outcomes or clinician evaluation, but make little mention of the critical first question of the athlete. This special issue has been developed with this central question in mind. We have assembled an impressive group of experts in their respective fields and asked them to present a concise review of the literature and their approach to surgical and rehabilitation treatment of specific injuries in athletes and return to play considerations. We hope this information will help

clinicians who care for athletes prepare to answer that critical first question: “Doc, when can I play again?”

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