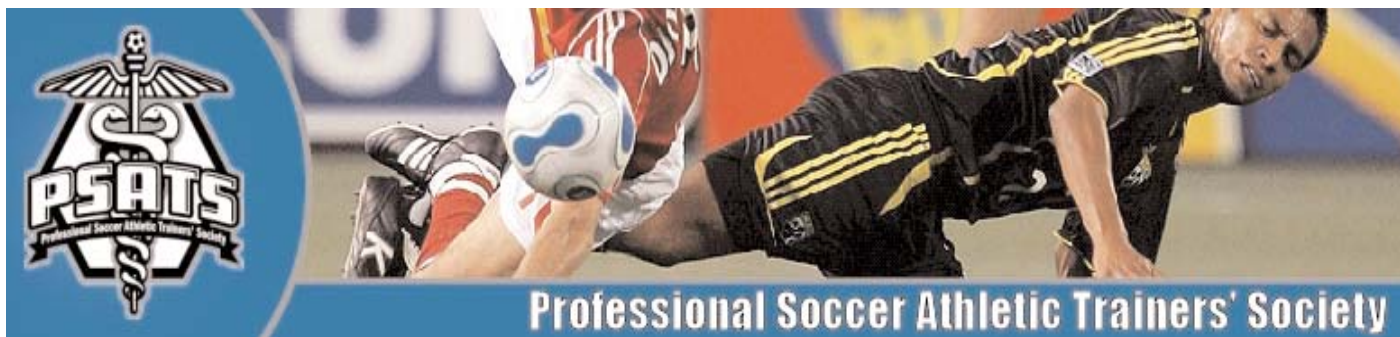




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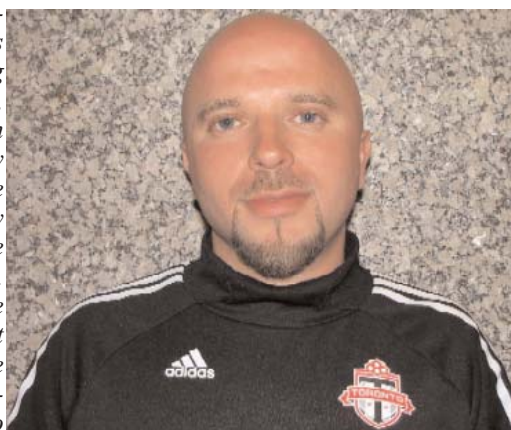
Soccer Injury Prevention Strategies Injury Prevention Practices: Effective Communication

Carmelo LoBue, Head Athletic Trainer, Toronto FC



We welcome a new regular contributor the Professional Soccer Athletic Trainers Society (PSATS) to Performance Conditioning Soccer. Each submission will provide coaches, parents and athletes with the latest strategies in prevention injury and maintaining a healthy soccer lifestyle. The mission of the Professional Soccer Athletic Trainers Society (PSATS) is to serve as an educational resource for the Major League Soccer athletic trainers. PSATS serves its members by providing for the continuing education of the athletic trainer as it relates to the profession thereby improving the athletic trainers understanding of sports medicine as it relates to soccer. PSATS strives to improve the education of its members so that they may better serve Major League Soccer, their organizations, and the professional soccer players under their care. PSATS also serves as an educational resource for those outside of the professional soccer community to better educate them on the role of the athletic trainer within the sports medicine team. Thank you PSATS!-ed

Carmelo Lobue joined Toronto FC in January 2007. Prior to entering the MLS he spent five seasons as an Assistant Athletic Therapist with the Toronto Argonauts Football Club of the Canadian Football League, and was a member of the 2004 Toronto Argonauts Grey Cup Champions. Lobue earned a Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology, and Certificate in Athletic Therapy in 2002 from York University (Toronto). He has experience working with varsity level



Carmelo LoBue

athletes, as well as professional CFL, NFL, and NHL athletes.

Good communication begins with coaches who are open and willing to listen to all members of a team, from the medical staff to the players themselves. This is especially important when we notice an athlete who is struggling with muscle tightness or soreness. Other members of the medical team such as the massage therapist, may tell you that the athlete might have considerable hamstring tightness during a massage session. This knowledge is conveyed to the strength and conditioning coach and head coach so that training sessions can be modified. As a result,

training may be modified on a certain day, which allows us to manage potential injuries. Keeping a player out of training for a day or two may make the difference between playing in the next game or sitting out because of injury.

This open line of communication is also of benefit to the athletes because they are in tune with what's going on and are allowed to have a say in their management as well. Even though we make the final decision, this involves the player in the process.

As far as trainer-athlete communication is concerned, we have two groups; those that tell you everything and others who wouldn't even tell you if their leg was broken. Here, technology can play an important role. The Activio heart rate monitoring system allows us to monitor on-field training sessions as well as individual performances.

Observing the heart rate of players can tell us when an athlete may be overtraining or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, not working hard enough. There may also be physical and/or psychological explanations for these issues. In the case of overtraining, it tells us that we may have to reduce the intensity of training. It is the role of the strength and conditioning coach (Paul Winsper) to communicate this information with the medical staff.

In the case when an athlete comes to me with an issue, my job is to do a thorough assessment to discover if there's a reason to hold back training. It may require something as simple as limiting training. I communicate this to the coaches and tell them why the limitation is necessary. Because our system of communication instills trust from athlete to coaching and medical staff, the change is easy to implement. Having an understanding of how the system works and that everyone's input is important, allows this system to work. In addition, the athletes pick up on this trust and unity within the staff, which leads to team building. Discussions with trainers from other sports has led me to

believe that our system is unique, and if done properly, may work better than many other current systems implemented by other teams.

The Process of Communication and Trust Building

For the system to work, daily pre- and post-training meetings are necessary. This allows all present—me, the coaches, the conditioning staff and other performance team members—to make the necessary job-specific adjustments. At these meetings everyone has an equal say, regardless of where they fit in the chain of command. We all know our roles and are comfortable talking to each other. Egos are not an issue. Everyone is open to constructive criticism, which makes adjusting training much easier. We strongly believe that the system we use has a lot to do with the success of keeping our players healthy.●

More Information Please!

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