Risk Management Assignment: Athletic Industry

Introduction

As far back as in the Roman era, athletics was a popular activity that many engaged in for leisure and entertainment. It is however in the late 1930s when athletes started receiving specialized training in universities, colleges and high schools i.e. in synthetic environments that are conceptualized to enhance simulation.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of individuals worldwide engage in athletics as a hobby and also as a primary source of income. Annual events such as the New York marathon, London marathon and the Sydney marathon have elevated the popularity of the sport to echelons not seen before.

The turnout of athletes during such events only goes to show that athletics is by no means ostracized anywhere in the world. Individuals from all continents throng these cities hoping to clinch the title and cash reward, while others engage just for the fun of it. Young adults and children alike are also actively involved in athletics throughout the globe. Inter-school competitions are popular amid high school students as a form of socialization and competitive sport.

With all these individuals occupied with one form of athletics or the other, there are high chances that injuries and accidents will occur during training and in the field. Considering the probability of such occurrences and our controversial social behaviour, it is very easy for an athletic camp to be sued over the accidents and injuries.

The court cases can be time consuming and expensive in terms of financial resources and reputation. It is therefore prudent for athletic institutions and schools to integrate apposite measures and precautions to make sure they provide the safest possible setting for the athletes, coaches, administrators and the spectators alike.

Therefore, risk management is the progression of analytically identifying conditions that may predispose participants to avoidable risk or harm and taking the preventive actions necessary that will help to reduce or eliminate this exposure. This could be done by either physical means like construction of barriers or theoretically by coming up with sound policies.

Athletic Risk Management

Due to the physical nature of athletics as a competitive sport, athletes will always be prone to injury during training and while performing in the field. However, through incorporation of risk management procedures the possibilities of accidents and injuries happening are drastically reduced. Athletic risk management is a broad spectrum of preventive measures designed to keep athletes out of harm’s way.

In that sense, there are various steps that are undertaken to form a water tight risk management plan for athletes. The National Athletic Trainers’ Association (NATA) is the body responsible for

the establishment of professional merits among trainers and the creation of a standard blueprint covering athletic risk management in the U.S. Formed in 1950, this body currently has more than 35,000 members (Ammon, 1997).

Their good performance and professionalism led them to include health care provision among their services, with more than 40 per cent of athletic trainers working in clinics and hospitals. Many athletic trainers offer their services to learning institutions while others work as health care providers in all professional sports including rodeo and car racing.

Moreover, other athletic trainers collaborate with the law enforcement sector and government agencies like the U.S. Senate and at the Pentagon. Apart from the United States, athletic trainers are also employed internationally in over 20 countries; such as Canada and Japan where they have over 400 athletic training camps. The NATA has in the long run been handed over the task of taking care of athletes' welfare, on and off the field.

Risk Management Plan

For any institution to properly guard its athletes from injury, proper risk management actions must be taken. In order for that to happen, a thorough analysis of the athletes' environment must be considered to cater for any imminent threat (Hall, 2006). This requires time and research through historical data and current events and once most of the problems have been determined, a risk management plan is put in place (Ammon, 1997).

A risk management plan is basically an identification of the prevailing threats that may cause injury or harm to an athlete and theoretical corrective measures which will be approved after successful implementation.

The risk management plan therefore covers every sphere of an athlete that may in one way or another cause harm or injury to an athlete under the guardianship of that institution. It is therefore a wide variety of threats and preventive measures and the result is a number of important steps are needed to provide comprehensive protection to athletes.

Emergency Management

It is imperative that pertinent medical data on all athletes be available to the instructors so that speedy treatment is given during emergencies.

Data such as blood group and chronic ailments such as diabetes, epilepsy, heart disease, allergies, or asthma that could be affecting an athlete should be well known by the instructor (Gray, 1995). Athletes should also be required to give the name of a physician and relatives to be contacted in emergencies and their contact details. Instructors and coaches are required to be cognizant with the procedures for summoning emergency medical care services.

A telephone should be readily available to each athletics trainer and the telephone should have the emergency numbers of the team physician, an emergency Operations Centre, the Fire Department and the Police Department. Additionally, each athletic play or training area should have adequate amounts of first aid and emergency care equipment readily accessible within the vicinity. The equipment should be conspicuously marked, regularly serviced and the medication

checked and replaced periodically (Hall, 2006).

Athletic Insurance

Many institutions ensure that they provide medical cover for their athletes. This is a strategic move to avoid litigation in case an athlete gets injured during practice or while performing in the field. Though the insurance covers any form of injury, most institutions have devised means to curb the overexploitation of the insurance cover by athletes (Gray, 1995). This is because athletes may sustain injuries elsewhere, yet they go on receiving treatment with the insurance cover that is meant to be used only in injuries resulting from the field.

Other athletes will go on to pay with their insurance for injured relatives causing the institutions and insurance companies to experience huge losses. For example, insurance offered to athletes by Florida Atlantic University's athletic department insurance is a secondary insurance policy. This means that even when a student athlete sustains injury on the field, the primary insurance which is the personal insurance will be used to settle the bill.

Bills are processed by the FAU medical system through the athlete's primary insurance, whereas the secondary insurance is used to settle any outstanding balances. Another example is the Central College of Illinois which provides insurance cover for athletes as long as they received an injury while participating in the field or officially supervised activities, including, practice sessions, sponsored events and official team tours. The institution does however reserve the right to revoke payment.

Prevalent Risks in Athletics and Effective Preparation

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the primary cause of death in young athletes. It becomes the responsibility of NATA to provide the knowledge and skill required to help deal with emergency situations among athletes, and reduce the risk of death during an accident.

However, through first-responder automated external defibrillator programs also known as AED programs, the public awareness regarding first aid and the use of defibrillators has improved. Athletes are therefore more likely to survive a cardiac arrest since chances are high that they will receive early defibrillation and CPR from a bystander.

The most crucial actions that can be taken to save an athlete's life in case of a cardiac arrest and they are: immediately contacting 911when signs of a cardiac arrest are identified, early bystander CPR is important to keep the person's lungs open, the early delivery of a shock with a defibrillator and early life support will ensure that a patient's heart does not stop beating and if it does, resuscitation after cardiac arrest is performed (Gray, 1995).

The above steps among others need to be outlined in an emergency action plan (EAP) developed by the athletic department. All institutions and organizations that support athletic activities should have an emergency action plan.

The plan should be definite to each athletic location and should include setting up a well-organized communication structure, preparation of possible first responders in CPR and AED use, obtaining the basic emergency equipment providing a proficient and synchronized

response plan, and ensuring access to early defibrillation (Gray, 1995).

To ensure rapid response to a real emergency, mock emergency situations should be played out often- twice in a year- and all the people involved according to the EAP should play their part to confirm a flawless emergency rescue is executed in case of a real emergency.

The more times it is practised the more efficient and effective the plan will be. Data should be collected during each mock event to ascertain the time taken from collapse to the moment first aid is administered (Gray, 1995). The time from collapse to CPR should take one minute or less and the time from collapse to first shock should be 3-5 minutes.

Conclusion

Athletic risk management on close scrutiny is a matter that is still potent to expansion. Various institutions still do not take full liability of the injuries sustained in athletic-related accidents and so the athletes end up paying most of the medical bills.

It is evident that the standard of athletic risk management is not universal, with various institutions having different standards on how best to protect their athletes. It is in my opinion that the government should set strict measures in place to enhance the protection of athletes from consequent harm during play or practice. A bill should be introduced that covers the whole spectrum of athletic risk management in an effort to standardize it by law.

References

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