Evaluating influences on classifications of severity for injuries in professional football

INTRODUCTION: According to consensus definitions for football surveillance, injury severity is classified from 'slight' to 'career ending', based on the number of days absence from participation. Recovery from injury has been highlighted as potentially influencing measures of injury severity. This study examined whether different definitions of return to participation (RTP), and playing in matches while injured, affect groupings of injury severity with injuries recorded in English professional football.

METHODS:
- Secondary analysis of published data
- 206 unique injuries identified
- Grouping of injuries: 161 conventionally reported injuries, 45 episodes of playing in matches while injured
- Analysis: Examination of difference between using return to training (RTT) and return to match (RTM) definitions, Analysis of effects on groupings of severity, Examination of patterns of return day

RESULTS:
- Effect of counting playing while injured towards severity
- Days absence: 3 cases reclassified into higher severity grouping
- Number of cases:
  - #1: 8
  - #2: 17
  - #3: 20
- Time loss due to injury
- Playing in matches while injured, no time loss

KEY FINDINGS: Recorded days absence is higher for RTM than RTT. RTP occurred on a Thursday or Friday in more than 50% of cases, in preparation for a Saturday game.

CONCLUSIONS:
- When measured in days, football injury severity is directly influenced by definitions of RTP
- Pain or injury symptoms do not contribute towards current severity classifications, yet often precede or follow a period of absence
- Expressions of injury severity in football should encompass more than just absence from participation

REFERENCES: