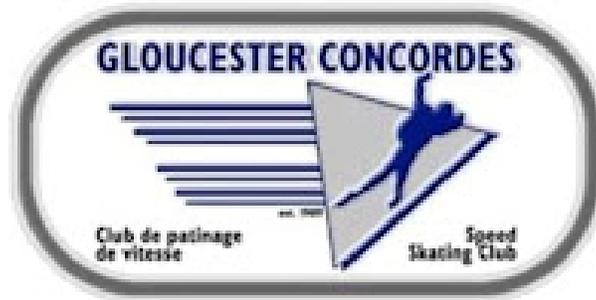


GLOUCESTER CONCORDES SPEED SKATING CLUB



Concussion Policy

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Gloucester Concordes Speed Skating Club - Concussion Policy

Background

We are passionate about speed skating because we want our kids to reach their full potential. Part of that potential is proactively managing their health and safety. We are learning more and more about the impact of concussions on youth in sports – of their severity and of their lasting impact, especially with regards to multiple concussions.

A concussion is an alteration of the normal function of the brain induced by trauma, either by a direct blow or by rotational forces that result in a rapid acceleration/deceleration of the brain within the skull. In speed skating concussion generally occur as a result of a fall resulting in impact into the boards or with the ice or a collision between skaters and while there is contact or rotation of the head involved it is not always the case. Helmets protect against skull fractures, they do not prevent concussions. As such, it is critical for coaches, officials, and parents/guardians to be vigilant for signs and symptoms.

Research indicates that there are millions of concussions in North America each year, and that the number of concussions occurring yearly is thought to be on the rise. In addition, in the case of sports-related concussions, if one returns to play before being fully recovered from a concussion, it is easier to obtain another concussion and the repeat concussion is likely to be more significant.

Identifying concussions is sometimes hard in youth. This can be more difficult in younger children because they either don't want to stop their activity, or they have a hard time verbalizing exactly how they feel. In 2013, Ottawa teen Rowan Stringer died as a result of suffering multiple concussions while playing rugby. She didn't tell her parents that she was already experiencing concussion symptoms, and so she continued to play, suffering another, fatal concussion. A coroner's report into her death found a lack of protocol when it came to addressing concussion management in youth sports. There were 49 recommendations made concerning everything from head injury awareness and prevention, as well as removal-from-play and return-to-play strategies for young athletes, coaches and mentors. As a result of this report, Rowan's Law was created - a legislative committee aimed at addressing these recommendations and increasing awareness.

In this regard, the Gloucester Concordes Board of Directors feel that it is important for the GCSSC to adopt a formal policy regarding concussion management in order to encourage awareness, and emphasize the importance of safety for all our skaters. This will also help clarify the process that must be followed in the case of a suspected concussion. This policy will take into account the following CHEO guidelines:

- If there is any concern that a child may have suffered a concussion, they are to be immediately pulled from the activity and reassessed prior to returning to the sport.
- The brain is still vulnerable to "repeat injury" even after symptoms have resolved. Therefore it is important to follow official "Return to Play Guidelines" when attempting to return back to sport.

NOTE: This document is not intended to replace seeking help from a trained medical professional with adequate concussion expertise. Parents/Guardians are responsible for the health and safety of their children/skaters at all times.

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Purpose of the Policy

The GCSSC is committed to maintaining the health of its athletes and believes that an athlete's health is more important than participating in the sport of speed skating. The GCSSC recognizes the increased awareness of concussions and their long-term effects and the GCSSC therefore enacts this Policy as a tool to help manage concussed and possibly-concussed athletes and preserve the health of its members.

Scope of the Policy

This Policy applies to all athletes, coaches, officials, members and decision-makers of the Gloucester Concordes Speed Skating Club.

Adherence to the Policy

The GCSSC adopts and adheres to Speed Skating Canada's Return to Play Procedure which includes both the Return to Speed Skating Protocol and Concussion Guidelines.

Policy Procedure

1. All coaches will be required to complete training for the Sport Concussion Assessment Tool (SCAT) in order for them to have a better understanding of concussion symptoms. The link for this tool may be found on the Speed Skating Canada website. Symptoms of a concussion include, but are not limited to:

- i. Nausea
- ii. Poor concentration
- iii. Amnesia
- iv. Fatigue
- v. Sensitivity to light or noise
- vi. Irritability
- vii. Poor appetite
- viii. Decreased memory

Red Flag symptoms include but are not limited to: Convulsions, worsening headaches, vomiting, and neck pain

The current SCAT tool used for athletes over 13 years of age is the SCAT5 and the CHILD SCAT5 is used to assess athletes 13 and under. Any new coaches will be required to be trained within one month of the start of the season. On-ice help are encouraged to receive the training as well. The Head Coach is responsible for ensuring that all coaches receive the required training.

2. During all GCSSC speed skating related events, competitions, and practices, participants (which include coaches, athletes, officials, and other members) will use their best efforts to:
 - a) Be aware of incidents that may cause a concussion, such as:
 - i. Falls
 - ii. Accidents
 - iii. Collisions
 - iv. Head trauma
3. Identify athletes or other individuals who have been involved in any of the above incidents and/or exhibit any of the above symptoms

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4. Athletes or other individuals who have been involved in an incident that may cause a concussion and who may exhibit symptoms of a concussion shall be removed from the speed skating activity.
5. As per GCSSC policy/code of conduct, minors (aged 15 and under) must always have a parent/guardian or responsible individual present during all club related activities including practices and competitions. Coaches and Officers of the GCSSC club are not responsible for minors but will work with parents/guardians or responsible individual to ensure that following the athlete being removed from the speed skating activity that the following steps are followed:
 - a) Call an emergency number (if the situation appears serious)
 - b) Notify the athlete's parent (if the athlete is a minor) or someone close to the athlete (if the athlete is not a minor)
 - c) Have a ride home for the athlete arranged, and ensure they will not be left alone at home
 - d) Isolate the athlete into a dark room or area
 - e) Reduce external stimulus (noise, other people, etc)
 - f) Remain with the athlete until he or she can be taken home (again ensure that they will not be alone once they are home. If a Master skater is assessed as potentially having a concussion and lives alone, they are to be taken to the hospital.)
 - g) Encourage the consultation of a physician (note that the athlete must have clearance from a physician in order to return to the ice)
6. Once the athlete's immediate needs have been met, the athlete's family or the athlete should be directed to Speed Skating Canada's Return to Play Procedure.

RETURN TO SPEED SKATING

Although everyone's concussion symptoms and recovery time are different, returning to normal activities after a concussion must be done in a step-wise process. Accordingly, an athlete who has been concussed is expected to follow the steps outlined in SSC's Return to Speed Skating Protocol before returning to practice with physician clearance to do so. An excerpt is provided below; the full reference is available at: <http://www.speedskating.ca/concussions-brain-injuries>

- STEP 1: Complete cognitive and physical rest.**
- STEP 2: Light aerobic exercise** to reintroduce physical activity: e.g.10-15 minutes of low intensity cycling on a stationary bike.
- STEP 3:** 30 minutes of cycling on a stationary bike at 75% of Max Heart Rate.
- STEP 4:** 30 minutes of cycling on a stationary bike at 75% of Max Heart Rate with 30 second maximum effort intervals at minutes 10, 15, and 20.
- STEP 5: Sport-specific aerobic activity and re-introduction of skating: 15 minutes of low intensity skating.**
- STEP 6:** 30 minutes of skating at 75% of Max Heart Rate with 30 second maximum effort intervals at minutes 10, 15, and 20.
- STEP 7:** Regular off-ice warm-up with high intensity off-ice agility/coordination activities and monitored high intensity off-ice and on-ice workout.
- STEP 8: Full on-ice practice**, including skating in traffic, tactical drills, starts and

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race simulations **once cleared by a physician**. Note that the physician who provides clearance at this point does not need to be the physician who diagnosed the original concussion, but does need to be aware of the nature and circumstances of the concussion.

STEP 9: Return to unrestricted training and competition

Medical Clearance

Speed Skating Canada's Return to Speed Skating Protocol requires the athlete to consult with a physician at two stages: a) before returning to light aerobic exercise, and b) before resuming full on-ice practice.

The GCSSC agrees with Speed Skating Canada's Return to Speed Skating Protocol and will require the athlete to obtain medical clearance, ideally from a physician familiar with concussions, before permitting the athlete to resume speed skating activity with the club. Medical clearance must be formally written by the physician, and a copy of the clearance must be given to the athlete's coach before Step 2 and Step 5.

The Head Coach will be responsible for keeping all medical clearance forms. The Head Coach will also be responsible for communicating to coaches and all of the on-ice help that the athlete is returning from a concussion and therefore care must be taken to ensure they have a healthy transition back to skating.

Disclaimer

The GCSSC Concussion Policy, as outlined in this document, is not intended to replace seeking help from a trained medical professional with adequate concussion expertise.

Concussions are often difficult to recognize, as some athletes may not have any signs or symptoms at the time of the incident.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for the health and safety of their children/skaters at all times.