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 PTA 2950

 10/16/2012

Field Observation Assignment

I attended the girls softball game SLCC vs. U of U on October 10th. It was a great game. I arrived an hour early to watch their warm-up routine. Their warm-up consisted of a very detailed sports specific routine as well as drills and stretching. As I arrived the team members were in their outfield positions but were taking turns practicing batting and catching the ball. After about 15 minutes of this, they began running forwards and backwards in a line. They also did some high kick marching and side stepping. Then they began their static stretching routine. This consisted of hamstring, quad, hip flexor, piraformis, hip adductor, and IT band stretches. They also did multi-directional shoulder stretches using the fence to hold onto. I also observed them doing some ballistic shoulder stretches, crossing their arms, arm circles, etc. After the stretching they organized the team members by positions and began grounders, plyometric quick throwing and catching, and batting. I thought the warm-up was very thorough. The only thing I would add is to focus more on the foot and ankle. Perhaps adding some ankle ROM and stretching to prevent ligamentous injuries.

Protective equipment was worn during the game. The girls wore batting gloves to protect their hands, long socks and pants for sliding, cleats, and a batting helmet with a face mask. The catchers wore shin guards and masks. Many of the girls were wearing mouth guards. I was not able to see if any of them had taping but I definitely believe some of them had ankle or knee tape on.

Thankfully, I did not see any injuries occur. Some common injuries that can occur in softball include overuse injuries as well as traumatic injuries. Overuse injuries consist of tendonitis of the shoulder, wrist, and elbow. RTC impingements and tears can occur as well. Common traumatic injuries include ankle sprains, meniscus tears and stress fractures. Contact injuries may occur as well. Players may collide while attempting to catch the ball or run for the base. Players could get hit by the ball or bat as well.

An ankle sprain is a common injury that can occur during a softball game. This may occur by rolling the ankle inward or outward during running or sliding. General rehabilitation would include Protection, Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation in the acute phase. Pain free ROM exercises would be initiated as well to keep the ankle moving. Light friction massage to the ligament to promote healing into the area can be incorporated as well. During the subacute phase, I would initiate manual resistive exercises including eccentric plantar flexion, dorsiflexion, inversion, and eversion. I would include gastroc/Soleus stretching if necessary, gait training, balance exercises, step training, and hip, knee, and ankle strengthening. During the functional phase I would begin more advanced strengthening and balance as well as initiating plyometrics, agility training and more sports specific activities such as running, sliding, etc. Manual techniques such as massage and joint mobilization should be used during the subacute and functional stage. To ensure the athlete is ready to return to playing softball I would want them to have full ankle ROM and strength 5/5 and be able to complete sports specific activities without increased pain. They should no longer have swelling in the area. They should also be able to perform a single leg stance x 30 seconds on an unstable surface with their eyes closed.

My role as a PTA in assisting these athletes would be to provide a safe but challenging rehabilitation program for them. This program should prepare the athlete to be able to compete again while allowing enough time for them to heal. I would also educate them on safety and how to properly warm-up to avoid future injuries. I would give them a Home Exercise Program and follow up with them to ensure they are performing exercises correctly. I would also incorporate core strengthening to prevent injuries as well. Most importantly, I would make sure they are ready to return to their sport safely.