

## Press Release

### College Lecturer Spots Worrying Trend for Female Football Players

Research work undertaken by Thurrock and Basildon Lecturer, Rosemary Stevenson has shown that females have a high chance of suffering the very serious anterior cruciate ligament injury when playing football.

Rosemary discovered that the injury, first made famous by Paul Gascoigne and more recently suffered by Mel C while participating in the Channel 4 programme 'The Games' is nearly three times more likely to happen to women than to their male counterparts

The results of Rosemary's work<sup>1</sup> were recently presented by Professor Graham Smith, her supervisor for the research. Professor Smith is Chairman of the Society of Sports Therapists, the lead organisation for Sports Therapy in the UK at the 14<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Physical Therapy in Barcelona.

Rosemary, who lectures in Sports Science at the Essex College has always had a passion for football. She began playing at the age of 7 for her local girls team and continued playing competitive football on a part-time basis for a number of years representing teams in the Women's National Premier League teams including Milton Keynes, Berkhamstead and Ilkeston.

Her attentions turned to coaching in 1990 when she undertook the FA Preliminary Football Coaching badge followed by the FA's Basic Treatment of Injuries course. It was on the sports injury course that she met former Watford FC Sports Therapist Phil Edwards. Edwards, himself a member of The Society of Sports Therapists encouraged her to join the organisation and develop her studies. Rosemary first undertook The Society of Sports Therapists Diploma in Sports Therapy and then became a full-time degree student at London Metropolitan University (formerly known as The University of North London), where she studied for a BSc honours degree in Sports Therapy.

With a background steeped in football, it came as no surprise when she decided to undertake the work as part of her final year dissertation whilst studying for her BSc Honours Degree in Sports Science at London Metropolitan University.

Rosemary explains:

'In the early stages of choosing a specific research subject area for my dissertation it became apparent there had been no research carried out on Women's Football within the UK. Given the rising popularity of women's football I was actually amazed by this situation and I suppose it really was the lack of information in the UK that inspired me to investigate this subject.'

Football has now been recognised as the fastest growing and number one female sport in England, recently overtaking netball. There are now 700 women's teams, 1,100 girl's teams and, approx 55,500 girls and women playing in affiliated league and cup competitions.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Smith who was former physiotherapist to Glasgow Rangers FC was impressed by Rosemary's work. He commented:

'Rosemary's research has brought into focus a worrying trend in female football players. The data collected is statistically significant and clearly shows that the incidence of this injury is on the increase.'

He continued: 'Men tend to naturally play with a lower centre of gravity than females which gives them a wider base of support. However, evidence suggests that as female players get tired they adopt a more upright posture than males which gives them a higher centre of gravity. Consequently, if you land when the knee is almost straight the ligaments are tight and a dynamic adjustment is needed to retain balance, so putting the ACL at risk.'

Rosemary, who has played the sport, coached and looked after injuries, is hopeful that football coaches and players will take note.

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'As a player I had been lucky not to have received any serious injury although I knew several players who had experienced ACL injuries at least once in their playing career. Players can help themselves by making sure they have the right footwear and coaches need to look at training methods mixing skills sessions with endurance and power training sessions to build up stamina.'

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## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

- A. The ACL is one of four knee ligaments that joins the thigh bone(femur) and shin bone(tibia). It attaches to the front (anterior) portion of the tibia and runs diagonally up attaching to the rear of the bottom of the femur. It plays a crucial role in stabilising the movements of the knee.
- B The Society of Sports Therapists is the lead professional body for Sports Therapy in the

## References:

1. Professor Graham N Smith, Rosemary Stevenson, A Study of Anterior Cruciate Ligament Injuries within the Women's Premier Soccer League of England and Wales.
2. [www.http://thefa.com/](http://thefa.com/)

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