

SAFETY ALERT 01/23 – Head Injuries

What happened?

An incident occurred recently when a sculler collided with a capsized boat resulting in the sculler being hit on the head by one of the other boat's oars. In February this year another experienced athlete suffered a head injury after hitting their head on a rigger whilst running within a boat storage area. Last year a rower was hit on the head by an oar whilst trying to right a capsized boat. In the first case the injured person (IP) subsequently showed signs of concussion and was taken to hospital for assessment. In the second case the IP was diagnosed as having suffered concussion. In the third case the IP suffered a cut to their forehead.

Why did it happen?

The causes of each incident vary but the key issue to highlight is that although rowing is a non-contact sport head injuries can and do occur and athletes, coaches and club officers need to be aware and know what to do if someone suffers a head injury.

What action was taken?

In all cases the IPs were assessed by medical staff at A&E units. It is important to note though that in one case the IP did not exhibit symptoms until later in the day after returning home and coaches etc should ensure that if the IP has gone home then someone is there to monitor them and that person should be instructed what to do if symptoms appear i.e. take the IP to an A&E unit.

What can others learn from this?

The following guidance should be followed in the event of a person suffering a head injury:

What symptoms should you look for?

- loss of consciousness (even for a few seconds)
- amnesia (memory loss)
- persistent headaches since the injury
- changes in behaviour
- confusion
- drowsiness
- a large bruise or wound to the head or face
- vision problems
- reading or writing problems
- balance problems or difficulty walking
- loss of power in part of the body

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• clear fluid leaking from the nose or ears Symptoms may not occur for several hours, or possibly days, so it is important to remain alert for signs and symptoms that could suggest a serious injury has been sustained.

What you should do?

- Take the casualty to nearest Accident and Emergency Department so that a Doctor can assess them.
- Do not let the casualty exercise, drive or manipulate heavy machinery. Call an ambulance if necessary.
- DO NOT let the casualty take any Drugs or Alcohol (other than prescribed medications) until they have been assessed by a Paramedic or Doctor

Phone 999 or 112 for an ambulance if the casualty:

- remains unconscious after the initial injury
- is having difficulty staying awake, speaking or understanding what people are saying
- is having a seizure or fit
- has been vomiting since the injury
- is bleeding from one or both ears

Afterwards

Explain to a friend or carer that for the next 24 hours, there is a need to keep an eye on the casualty and stay within easy reach of a telephone. If any symptoms appear or their condition deteriorates seek medical advice immediately.

Returning to sport

Exercising when suffering from concussion can make the condition worse. All sport should be avoided for 7 – 10 days or longer if the concussion is severe. Head injuries sustained outside rowing should be reported to the coach. If in any doubt seek healthcare professional advice and follow it.

Scalp wounds

Sometimes head injuries are caused by walking into riggers. In most cases these result in a scalp wound which is not serious but they normally bleed profusely and you may need medical treatment to stop the bleeding.

More information

See <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Concussion/Pages/Introduction.aspx> and links.

If in any doubt about a head injury, do not exercise, seek medical advice and follow it