COMMON MULTISPORT INJURIES
AND
STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION

Now that the weather is beginning to change, the tendency to significantly increase activity tends to rise with the mercury. Although increasing activity is generally good, too much of an increase in a short period of time can lead to injury. In this article, we will discuss, in general, injuries that appear to be common in the multisport community. In addition, we will provide some general tips to prevent the onset of these maladies. In subsequent articles, we will more specifically investigate injuries that arise with participation in a variety of athletic pursuits.

Since swimming is the first leg of most triathlon events, we will lead off with common injuries in that discipline. Due to the arm motions necessary to complete the swimming stroke, the rotator cuff tendons can become irritated. This can lead to problems such as impingement syndrome and rotator cuff tendonitis. In most cases, these problems are a result of altered stroke mechanics that are either a result of the pain, or a cause of it. In either case, having stroke analysis performed can help eliminate these causative factors. Additionally, stroke analysis provides the opportunity to begin incorporating specific drills into training to improve the efficiency of the stroke and correct any flaws noted. Prevention of muscle imbalances through proper weight training and flexibility training are important weapons against injury as well.

After exiting the water, we hit the bike. Common injuries in this discipline include patellofemoral pain syndrome (pain in the front of the knee), iliotibial band syndrome (lateral knee pain), and patellar tendonitis. One of the most important considerations with pain while cycling is proper fit. Having a fit assessment by a qualified professional is a great way to avoid problems or alleviate pain that is a result of improper positioning. An often overlooked component this time of year is the transition from winter riding clothes to warm weather gear. The shedding of layers, if you will, effectively creates the need for a change in seat height. It is typically a very small change, perhaps millimeters. When you consider, however, that your knees and hips flex approximately 6,000 times in an hour-long session, these small changes could eliminate and/or prevent big problems. It is actually worthwhile to have cycling fit assessed frequently (at least once annually) as changes in flexibility, strength, weight can all influence the position on the bike. In addition to having bike fit assessed and corrected, it is necessary to ensure a base

level of training before jumping into interval work. Along those same lines, it is imperative to avoid pushing a big gear until the body has had a chance to adapt to outdoor riding. Orthotics are often considered in running injuries, but may be necessary for cycling as well.

Speaking of running injuries, there are a number of possibilities to discuss in this arena, but in the interest of brevity, we will only mention a few. Achilles tendonitis, plantar fasciitis, and heel spurs tend to be the most common. Evaluation of running gait is a great place to start for the elimination or prevention of these injuries. This allows the determination of biomechanical factors that may be contributing to the symptoms being experienced. Additionally, this allows for the proper pairing of foot type with the proper shoe. For example, if it is found that someone is an overpronator, a more stable, more supportive shoe would be the running shoe of choice versus something with more cushioning. Flexibility and strength training prove very helpful in preventing and alleviating these problems. Changing running shoes often is very critical as well (every 300-400 miles). It is actually a good idea to have two pair of running shoes and alternate use to maintain the cushioning and supportive properties of the shoe more effectively.

Looking at the injuries noted above, there are some general guidelines that could be followed no matter the discpline. To summarize, these tips include the following: 1. Have professional analysis of swimming stroke, bike fit and running gait. 2. Prevent muscle imbalance through proper weight training and flexibility training. 3. Increase mileage and intensity slowly. 4. Ensure cycling and running shoes match foot type appropriately. 5. Perform technique drills to maximize efficiency and prevent flaws/bad habits from arising.