

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

SELECTED MUSCULOSKELETAL AND PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS OF MEMBERS OF A WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM: APPLICATION OF A PRE-PARTICIPATION EXAMINATION

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ABSTRACT

Background. Although it is common practice to administer pre-participation examinations (PPE) of athletes prior to training, there are no clearly established formats. Elements integral to the PPE fall within the scope of physical therapist practice, and are often categorized as a form of primary prevention for musculoskeletal disorders as defined in the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*.

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to describe the design and implementation of a PPE for a women's professional (gridiron) football team. The results and findings from this PPE provide one of the first musculoskeletal profiles and information about selected physical characteristics from members of a female professional football team.

Methods. Players from the Kentucky Karma women's football team, a member of the National Women's Football Association (NWFA), volunteered to participate in a PPE. Of twenty-five eligible team members, thirteen consented to participate. The PPE consisted of a health history questionnaire, a musculoskeletal screening, and a series of physical performance and agility tests.

Results. The players' average (\pm SD) age, height, weight, body mass index (BMI), and body fat percentage were 29.6 (\pm 5.6) yrs., 1.66 (\pm .05) m, 66.8 (\pm 12.6) kg, 24.1 (\pm 3.7), and 27.4 (\pm 6.6) %, respectively. Commonly reported injuries were similar to those reported in men's collegiate football.

Conclusion. This is one of the first papers to report on a model PPE for a women's professional football team. Future research is needed to establish a standard PPE, recognize common injuries, and develop prevention strategies unique to women's professional football.

Key words: musculoskeletal screening, female athlete, performance testing

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