



# The Role of Sports Trainers in Australia

by Dr John Orchard, Medical Officer, Sydney Rooster NRL Team

**sports trainers digest**  
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Australia is recognised as having one of the highest levels of sports medicine care in the world, although I believe that this has arisen out of our natural level of interest in sport rather than superior planning. Orthopaedic surgeons, sports physicians, general practitioners, physiotherapists and sports trainers all have a role to play in the care of sporting teams, although the input of each of these types of professionals is different depending on the team and the availability of each practitioner.

## The Yanks

Sports Trainers in Australia may or may not be aware that in the USA, the athletic trainer has a much greater profile and level of importance. Athletic Trainers must complete a university degree in order to be certified in the USA, and schools and colleges all have full-time Athletic Trainers available to look after the athletes. This infrastructure means that in the USA, the minimum standard of qualification for the primary carer of a sporting team is greater than that in Australia.

## The Aussies

In Australia, there are obviously highly experienced Sports Trainers that provide a level of care that would be as great as that found in the USA, but there may be teams being covered by Trainers with a Level 1 SMA qualification, which is obviously not as great as a college degree. On the other hand, the average physiotherapist in Australia has more sports-specific training with respect to team care than the average physical therapist in the USA, and sports physicians in Australia (who look after teams at higher levels) have specialist medical training to a greater degree than is available in the USA.

## The Future

Eventually in Australia we need to move to an infrastructure where all sports have a minimum level of coverage and injuries are managed by a centralised system. Sporting injuries are fundamentally no different to work place injuries or traffic accidents, in that some of them will inevitably occur, but if injuries are monitored and systematically managed prevention is possible. Continuing the comparisons with other countries, in New Zealand there is a far superior infrastructure for monitoring sporting injuries than in Australia. This infrastructure will inevitably occur in Australia, although currently there are far too many politicians berating our youth for being

obese instead of offering policy that might assist with getting the population more active, such as the aforementioned improved infrastructure for monitoring sports injuries.

It goes without saying that if a national database for monitoring sports injuries is established, as is the case in New Zealand, then the role of the Sports Trainer in the community will elevate in importance. We aren't going to have the situation arise where overnight there is a sports physician and/or sports physiotherapist available to cover every sporting match that occurs in Australia, so Sports Trainers will need to be the primary recorder for injuries in the majority of sporting competitions.

If we actually reach the situation where a Federal government department receives a bill each year for treating sporting injuries, then the issue of trying to prevent injuries becomes far more important. Having well trained staff available at every sporting venue will become a much greater priority than it already is.

Compared to the cost of treating injuries, it will be a drop in the ocean for the Federal government to fund greater opportunities for Sports Trainers continuing education and even payment for services. Unfortunately we don't know whether these days are a couple of years away or more than a decade, but eventually they will come as

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there is enough of a mind-shift towards assisting the population become more active. Until this time (and maybe even after it), most Sports Trainers will continue to work based on love of the job rather than financial reward for service. This will include, for the most part, funding one's own education. The standard qualification for Sports Trainers are achieved through Sports Medicine Australia (<http://www.sma.org.au/sportstrainers/>), although more and more Trainers in the future may have a related tertiary qualification such as human movement or sports science.

### Resources

There are many good sports medicine textbooks available to help Trainers manage injuries (with Brukner and Khan's Clinical Sports Medicine probably the most popular in Australia, see details at:

(<http://www.clinicalsportsmedicine.com/>).

The internet is now also a great source of information, with the Journal of Athletic Training now available free in full-text on the web at :

<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/tocrender.fcgi?action=archive&journal=131>

The [www.injuryupdate.com.au](http://www.injuryupdate.com.au) site which I administer has good links and information available, including the Forum, which is a section where you can post your own information about injuries, ask questions or discuss management of injuries with other sports medicine professionals:

<http://www.injuryupdate.com.au/forum/>



Sports players sustaining dental injury are often assisted by well-meaning but dentally inexperienced staff relying on first aid kits containing no materials nor relevant instructions for managing this type of injury.

#### The Solution... Dentist in a Box !!

For more information and for ordering contact the MERCHANDISE section of the SMA Website

[www.sma.org.au/merchandise](http://www.sma.org.au/merchandise)



Do you have a story or an issue you would like discussed in the Digest? If so, please contact Dominic Feenan on 02 6230 4650 or email at [dominic.feenan@sma.org.au](mailto:dominic.feenan@sma.org.au)

## Come and Rub Shoulders with the Team

### Australian Conference of Science and Medicine in Sport

Alice Springs, 7 – 9 October 2004

Sports Medicine Australia likes to advertise itself as the "team behind the teams"

People who work in sport understand the importance of working together to achieve the best outcome – and that means understanding and respecting the work of everyone else in the team.

Australia has made great strides in sports medicine and science in recent years – in fact, in many areas, we probably lead the world. But many SMA members believe that the development of the Sports Trainer system and the role of the Sports Trainer in sport has been one of our most significant achievements. Sports Trainers are increasingly becoming the backbone of sport – especially at the community level.

Attending the 2004 Australian Conference of Science and Medicine in Sport (ACSMS) in Alice Springs this year would be a fascinating experience for any Sports Trainer – a chance to develop skills, increase knowledge and make contacts. As well as high powered science, there will be a lot of other sessions that get down to the "nitty gritty" of injury prevention and treatment at the grassroots.

Best of all, you can turn the visit into a holiday and maybe even stay on to work at the Territory Masters Games which start a few days after the Conference.

More details can be found at :  
<http://www.sma.org.au/ACSMS/2004/>

### Sports Trainers and the Commonwealth Games

Chief Medical Officer of the Commonwealth Games, Dr Peter Harcourt, has told SMA that he plans a significant role for Sports Trainers at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

If you would like to register an interest in working at the Commonwealth games, contact Dominic Feenan in the National Office. ([dominic.feenan@sma.org.au](mailto:dominic.feenan@sma.org.au))

Anyone attending the Alice Springs Conference will get a jump on the field as Dr Harcourt plans to make a presentation at the Conference about the way medical coverage will be conducted and how the coverage teams will be organised.



# The Quest to be the Best

Many SMA accredited Sports Trainers are working in elite sporting environments. To reach the pinnacle in your sport the quest for knowledge and the development of your skills is essential. Ensuring your accreditation remains current and progressing to the Level 2 Sports Trainer Course are the first steps to a rewarding career as a Sports Trainer. The following stories are an example of how dedication can lead to success in the big time.

## Hans Harms - Trainer with the St Kilda Football Club in the AFL

I attended the Level 1 Sports Trainer course provided to the Australian Football League (AFL) by SMA. I have been associated with SMA for a number of years and hope to continue for many more. I have worked with a basketball team, netball team, a rugby team and football teams. All have different needs in areas of first aid, strapping and massage.

At the present time I am a trainer with St.Kilda Football Club in the AFL. The job requirements are the same as at any other club, although at an AFL club there are Doctors and Physiotherapists that deal with the majority of the players' medical requirements. The medical staff are present at all the games, but you still need the skills and qualifications of a Sports Trainer.

You soon realise that those you assist do appreciate it. I can remember working with an under 16s team and using R.I.C.E.R on a soft tissue injury. The player did what I asked of him and was able to return to play the next week. The player came up to me and just said, "thanks." This was a small reward but keeps you thinking that it is all worth while. There have naturally been times when I have been required to exercise my skills dealing with the more serious incidents such as an unconscious player. I am glad that I completed a Sports Trainers Course when dealing with major injuries.

I made the decision that I wanted to learn more. I wanted to be able to provide a better service to the players. I made enquiries about the Level 2 Sports Trainer Course. The Level 2 Course is the natural progression. It's the next step. When completing the Level 2 Course you have the opportunity to discuss issues with other working trainers, topics you may not have been involved in for some time and further expand your knowledge.

Whether you are a Level 1 or a Level 2 Trainer it is crucial to re-accredit when your qualification expires. There are so many things to remember, so many things that change the way we deal with situations. The only way you can be sure of becoming aware of change is to have someone provide the knowledge to you and what better way than to attend a re-accreditation where you know the information has come from the correct source. Working as a qualified Sports Trainer is very rewarding. It creates friendships, experiences and gives one an opportunity to give back something to which ever sport you may be involved in.

*by Hans Harms.*

## Phil Driscoll - Co-ordinator Occupational Health and Safety

### Ray Connelly - Head Trainer

## St George Illawarra Rugby League Football Club in the NRL

I became a Sports Trainer way back in 1984. I have been involved in just about all levels of sport including the Olympics, Paralympics, representing Australia at both Rugby League and Basketball, NRL, NBL, ABA both men and women plus junior sports of all ages. Ray has been a Sports Trainer since 1988 and has focused his efforts on Rugby League with St George RLFC and the St George Illawarra Dragons RLFC, as well as huge amounts of time dedicated towards junior sport.

We have worked together at the Dragons since 1999 when the two clubs, that is the St George RLFC and Steelers RLFC, merged. Ray and I have both aspired to reach the top level of Sports Training. To reach this level, it is paramount that you gain a Level 2 Sports Trainers accreditation. The accreditation will give you the very best platform in Sports Medicine and will

make you a better Sports Trainer. The benefits of this qualification are numerous and you continue to increase your skills, knowledge and education. It is also advisable to attend as many SMA Workshops and Conferences as possible.

Remember to re-accredit every three years as well as updating your First Aid certificate. SMA endeavours to make the re-accreditation process educational and fun. There is a nice balance of education, skills update and competency based testing.

Ray and I both feel that as a Sports Trainers it is essential to increase our knowledge as often as possible and grasp new information in regards to Sports Medicine.

*by Phil Driscoll*

### Do you need to Re-accredit or enrol in the Level 2 Course ?

#### Contact your SMA State Branch

NSW - Ph: 02 9660 4333 Web: [www.smansw.com.au](http://www.smansw.com.au)

ACT - Ph: 02 6247 5115 Web: [www.smartplay.com.au](http://www.smartplay.com.au)

VIC& - Ph: 03 9654 7733

TAS Web: [www.sma.org.au/vic2003.asp](http://www.sma.org.au/vic2003.asp)

SA - Ph: 08 8234 6369 Web: [www.smasa.asn.au](http://www.smasa.asn.au)

WA - Ph: 08 9285 8033 Web: [www.smawa.asn.au](http://www.smawa.asn.au)

NT - Ph: 08 8981 5362

Web: <http://members.iinet.net.au/~smant/dialog/>

QLD - Ph: 07 3870 4195 Web: [www.smaqlld.com.au](http://www.smaqlld.com.au)

# Join the 'team behind the teams' at SMA

## Check the Benefits of Membership :

**Insurance Cover** for personal accident and professional indemnity. Subscription to Sport Health, discounts on SMA Clothing, publications and other merchandise, an invitation to SMA exclusive events, reduced cost for registration to all SMA Conferences, access to the exclusive SMA Sports Trainer Leuko Website ([www.leukosports.com.au](http://www.leukosports.com.au)) and discounts on various products and services via our MemberBenefits Program.

### The Sports Liability Cover includes :

- Public Liability (\$2 Million)
- Professional Indemnity (\$2 Million)
- Products Liability (\$2 Million)

### The Personal Accident Cover includes:

- Capital Benefits (Death and total disablement \$50 000)
- Loss of Income (\$200 a week up to 52 weeks)
- Medical Benefits (non Medicare costs up to \$1000)

## Application for Sports Trainer Insurance and Membership of SMA



Please print clearly and return to:

**Sports Medicine Australia**

PO Box 237 DICKSON ACT 2602

Ph: (02) 6230 4650 Fax: (02) 6230 5908

Website: [www.sma.org.au](http://www.sma.org.au)

Email: [smanat@sma.org.au](mailto:smanat@sma.org.au)

### Applicants Details

Surname  Given Name

Title Mr  Mrs  Ms  Other  Date of Birth  Gender M  F

Address Number  Street/Road

Suburb/Town/City  State  Postcode

Home Phone Area Code (  ) Number  Work Phone Area Code (  ) Number

Current Accreditation No.  Email

### Membership and Insurance Fees

The Insurance Policy Premium and Membership are calculated on a 12 month period from July to July each year. The prices quoted below is for Membership and Insurance up until July 2005. Contact SMA for more information.

If Paying in May 2004	If Paying in June 2004	If Paying in July 2004
\$ 151.67	\$ 140.83	\$ 130

Note: All prices include GST

### Payment Details

CHEQUE, made payable to Sports Medicine Australia

#### CREDIT CARD

- Mastercard
- Visa
- Bankcard

Card Number

Card Holder's Name

Card Holder's Signature

Expiry Date

Amount Authorised \$

### Declaration

I hereby agree to abide by the Sports Medicine Australia, Sports Trainer Code of Ethics

Sports Trainer's Signature  Date