



'Return To Play' rules for Shoulder injuries in Overhead athletes

Part 2 Guidelines for a clinical based decision

Clearance for 'Return To Play' is given by an appropriate healthcare professional. The guidelines are not absolute and clearance for 'Return To Play' remains at the discretion of the appropriate healthcare professional leading the treatment plan.

Subjective Criteria

- ☑ Minimal pain or tenderness (VAS 1/10 or less)
- ☑ Subjective satisfaction of the treatment by the patient
- ☑ Satisfactory finding on clinical examination – no painful tests
- ☑ Successful completion of a progressive rehabilitation program



Mobility Criteria

- ☑ 5° maximum difference in total shoulder range of motion (external rotation + internal rotation) when comparing right side versus left side
- ☑ 20° maximum difference in shoulder internal rotation (left vs right shoulder)
- ☑ In full arm elevation, upward inclination of the scapulae should be at least 45°-55°: some degree of asymmetry may be normal in unilateral athletes
- ☑ Full sport-specific functional range of motion of the shoulder e.g. extreme flexion, abduction and internal rotation in overhead Powerlifting movements



Strength Criteria

- ☑ 100% isokinetic ratio in protraction/retraction of the scapulae
- ☑ 66% isokinetic ratio in external rotation/internal rotation of the shoulder
- ☑ 75% isometric ratio in external rotation/internal rotation of the shoulder: a 10% increase in rotator cuff strength may be normal on the dominant side



Functional Criteria

- ☑ Excellent static and dynamic stability of the shoulder joint
- ☑ Adequate proprioception observed through dynamic stabilisation exercises
- ☑ Demonstration of proper throwing mechanics in sport-specific overhead exercises e.g. a jump shot in handball
- ☑ Sport-specific functional fatigue tests to assist 'Return To Play' decision e.g. modified pull-up test

