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The Training—Injury Prevention Paradox: Should Athletes be Training Smarter and Harder?

When an athlete sustains a “preventable” injury, those involved in the training process often blame “high workloads”. However, most of the dogma surrounding athlete workloads and injury is based around the incorrect assumption that high workloads lead to injury. In recent times, a wealth of evidence, from a wide range of sports, has shown that progressing athletes to high workloads not only provides better preparation for the physical demands of competition, but also may *decrease* the risk of injury. An important point that has been overlooked with the majority of workload-injury literature, is that absolute high loads are not necessarily problematic, as long as they are prescribed safely and systematically. The acute:chronic workload ratio has allowed sports practitioners to safely prescribe increases in workload, based on the athlete’s ability to tolerate those increases in workload. More importantly, skill coaches, sports medicine personnel, and fitness staff now have a common language that can be used when progressing athlete’s through different (e.g. rehabilitation, recovery, or functional over-reaching) interventions. This presentation will discuss the importance of physically hard and appropriate training in protecting athletes against injury. The strengths and limitations of the acute:chronic workload ratio will also be discussed. Finally, delegates will be invited to “put the theory into practice” by participating in a “hands-on” workload monitoring and athlete management workshop.