

4 | Ouch! Dealing with Injuries

I've been injured pretty badly. My team needs me, and I want to get back to playing as soon as possible. What should I do?

Getting injured and riding the pine can be one of the most frustrating experiences for any athlete. It can also be a time of growth. How can you make the most of it?

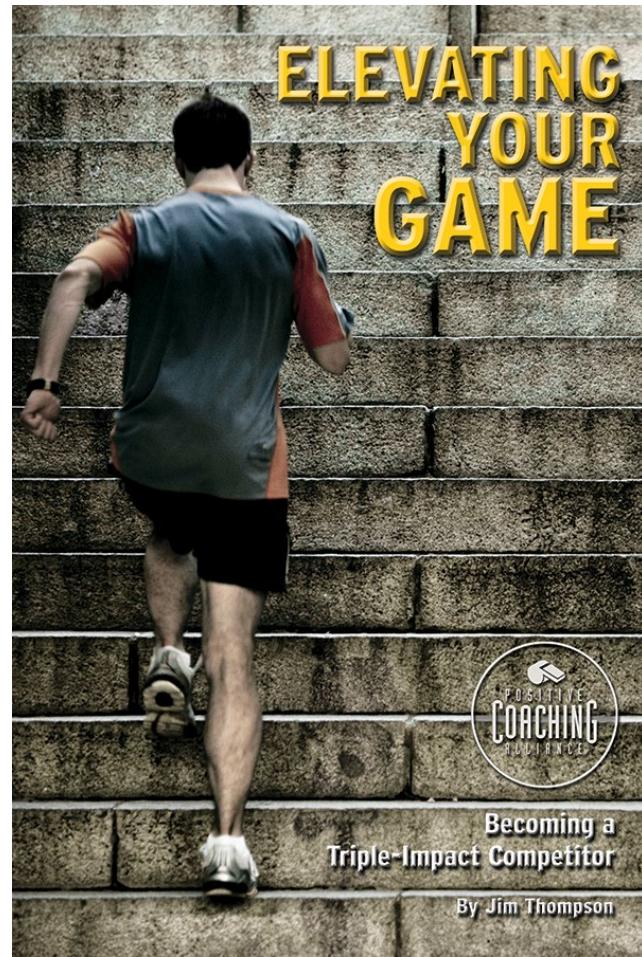
Get great advice for how to get back to your sport. Sports trainers, your doctor, and physical therapists are your best source of rehabilitation information.

Approach your rehabilitation like you do practices and games. Work hard in rehab, just like you do in practice. Listen to your rehab "coaches" (the medical experts). Chart your progress, no matter how small. Celebrate "wins" along the way. Given the right effort, the result – your good health – is likely to take care of itself.

Recognize that injuries can have an upside. When I was sidelined in high school with a broken rib on my right side, I spent hours dribbling and shooting a basketball with my left hand. I also learned to open my locker and brush my teeth left-handed. Use injury time to work on areas that you can improve on without compromising your recovery.

Resist the pressure to come back too soon. People may encourage you to rejoin the team before you are fully healed. Resist this pressure. Listen to your doctor or trainer and return only when you are fully healed. Your lifelong health may be at stake, and risking it to come back too soon will be seen as crazy later in life.

Ask your coach how you can help the team. You might analyze videotape of future opponents, mentor younger players, or chart statistics during games. You might serve as team journalist writing stories about the team for the school paper or the team's web site. And you can always fill your teammates' E-Tanks during practices and games.



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