POLICY STATEMENT

Pregnancy in Sport Policy

Date of approval: July 2009
Date to be reviewed: December 2010
Contact Person: Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

UQ Sport has adopted the following policy as developed by the Australian Sports Commission (Pregnancy in Sport: guidelines Australian Sports Commission). The guidelines are intended as a practical checklist for all those concerned with pregnancy in sport. However, because each person, each pregnancy and each sport is different, these guidelines can only assist in a general way with regards to making decisions about the issue.

Underpinning all guidelines outlined in this document is the consensus that decisions about the participation of pregnant women in sport must be made in consultation with medical advisers. While the benefits of women staying active during pregnancy are well documented, all decisions about the matter should be made by the individual participant in consultation with medical advisers.

The health and well-being of pregnant women and their unborn children is the most critical factor to consider when thinking about this topic. A vital part of ensuring that risk is kept to an absolute minimum is education and awareness.

The pregnant participant should:

(a) Before making the decision about whether to continue to participate in sport, obtain expert medical advice, and obtain a clear understanding of the risks, particularly in regard to your sport.
(b) Regularly review your training and performance program with your medical adviser.
(c) Consider discussing the implications of your pregnancy with coaches, officials and administrators.
(d) Consider your insurance cover and ensure that it is adequate and relevant.
(e) Use common sense and do not take unnecessary risks.
(f) Take into account the changes in your physical condition.
(g) Do not increase the intensity of your sporting program while you are pregnant, and always work at less than 75 per cent of your maximum heart rate.
(h) Watch for warning signs, such as bleeding or abdominal pain, and see a doctor immediately if these occur.

UQ Sport and Affiliated Clubs should:

(a) Be aware of relevant federal, and state or territory anti-discrimination legislation and how it affects your organisation and sport;
(b) Evaluate the measures you should take to limit the likelihood of pregnant participants being harmed and take reasonable care to ensure that such
measures are carried out;
(c) Respect and support the rights of women who wish to continue exercising while pregnant;
(d) Ensure that policies are in place to outline the organisation’s commitment to equal opportunity and avoiding discrimination, particularly where pregnant women are concerned, and review the rules and regulations, and the organisation’s constitution, with this in mind. Ensure that everyone in your organisation understands these policies and commitments. It is important that the policies are continually updated;
(e) Ensure that insurance policies are up to date and provide appropriate cover;
(f) Develop practices that minimise the risk of injury to all participants;
(g) Seek professional medical or legal advice when necessary and ensure that this advice is available to coaches and officials when required;
(h) Avoid giving advice that you are not qualified to give, and encourage pregnant athletes to obtain and act on professional medical advice, particularly about the risks of continuing to play and when to stop;
(i) Provide a clear statement containing this advice in the registration form for your sport or competition, or in similar documents, and display a similar notice in a prominent place where all will see it.

Coaches should:

(a) Encourage athletes to obtain and act on professional medical advice with regard to pregnancy and sport;
(b) Respect and support the rights of women who wish to continue exercising while pregnant;
(c) Avoid giving advice that you are not qualified to give;
(d) Select participants by merit and capability, without discriminating on the basis of pregnancy;
(e) Ensure that insurance policies are up to date and provide appropriate cover.

Officials should:

(a) Advise pregnant athletes that there may be risks involved in participating while pregnant, and that they should obtain medical advice about whether to participate and for how long;
(b) Provide a clear statement containing this advice in the registration form for your sport or competition, or in similar documents, and display a similar notice in a prominent place where all will see it;
(c) Apply the rules and laws of the sport or activity equitably at all times;
(d) Place the safety and welfare of all participants above all else;
(e) Respect and support the rights of women who wish to continue exercising while pregnant;
(f) Avoid giving advice that you are not qualified to give;
(g) Ensure that insurance policies are up to date and provide appropriate cover.

In summary, it remains the decision of the pregnant participant to weigh up the benefits of exercising during pregnancy against the perceived risk of injury to herself or her unborn child.

Important Information:

This publication is intended as an information source for UQ Sport, its staff, administrators, coaches, officials employed or voluntary. It is not intended as, nor is
suitable to be used as, advice to sports participants. Pregnancy in sport is essentially a medical issue, and it is therefore vital that pregnant women who wish to participate in sport obtain medical advice before doing so. The issues discussed in the document can be complex, and resolutions will vary from person to person and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. This document should not be considered a substitute for professional legal or medical advice. While care has been taken in the preparation of this material, the writer and publisher do not accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, nor for the result of actions taken on the basis of this information.