



TAEKWONDO CANADA

Taekwondo Canada

Rule Changes in Action:
How Taekwondo Canada is Leading the Way
March 1, 2023



Overview - Concussions in Taekwondo

- ▶ A concussion is a brain injury that cannot be seen on routine X-rays, CT scans or MRIs. Concussions may affect cognitive abilities and memory functions, along with various other symptoms.
- ▶ The incidence of concussion among sparring Taekwondo participants is estimated to be four times higher than that of football. Points scored for head kicks are more than for body blows.
- ▶ Concussions are frequent in taekwondo even though athletes wear head and mouth guards. The danger remains frequent and high.
- ▶ In a 2017 study, the incidence of concussions was 13.8/1000 Athlete Exposures (fights) for men and 12.1/1000 for women



Changes at the National Level

- ▶ Based on the information received, the incidence of concussion amongst taekwondo athletes in Canada remains high. A major stumbling block remains the lack of willingness to report (coaches/parents) for fear of being unable to compete. Something needed to be done within our sport to address this.
- ▶ As well, Sport Governing Bodies above us have still not addressed this to our satisfaction. Referees are still not instructed to stop the fight should they suspect a concussion has occurred - video review is only used for scoring of head kicks.
- ▶ National referees have been instructed on the warning signs of concussions and ordered to stop fights when, in their minds, a potential concussion has been suffered. **This does not happen anywhere else in the world. We are now lobbying to have this happen worldwide.**



How are we Educating our Athletes and Others

- ▶ There was concern regarding a lack of proper structure for concussion recognition. This began the process in 2021 of creating a concussion-based education system for athletes, coaches and officials.
- ▶ Working with Parachute, we designed a program which would not only educate but help identify when an athlete may have potentially suffered a concussion in competition and direct them to medical attention.
- ▶ The program features a concussion guide for athletes, parents, coaches and referees who, not only at the national team level, must understand the potential dangers facing them.
- ▶ At the National level, Athletes/Coaches/Referees/Parents must now, sign off on the policy in their Athlete/Coach/Staff Agreements. All must understand and expect our Action Plan to take effect.



Changes within Taekwondo Canada

- ▶ Athletes/Parents/Coaches have also been provided with a concussion prevention “tool kit”. This tool kit provides everything from identification, return to competition strategy to the frequently asked questions guide.
- ▶ Provincial and Territorial Sport Orgs (P/TSO’s) have now been provided with this mandated information with the goal of ensuring that all athletes at the provincial and grassroots levels must be aware of the dangers of concussion and what the next steps are. This has taken a bit of time for an overall buy in but it is happening.
- ▶ At our most recent National Championships, two athletes were brought out of the ring by referees who believed them to have suffered a head injury, this has never happened before.



Changes within Taekwondo Canada

- ▶ Overall, the introduction of Taekwondo Canada's concussion protocol has been well-received.
- ▶ Athletes/Parents/Coaches more than ever understand that Taekwondo Canada has a duty of care to all to provide this to the membership from a Safe Sport point of view.
- ▶ The insurance provider for Taekwondo Canada has also looked at this change/development of policies favourably in terms of the coverage we now receive.
- ▶ We believe that there is more work to be done, not only within Canada, but throughout the world to protect our athletes as best we can from concussions. We continue to lobby our international partners to get onside with us.



TAEKWONDO CANADA

Questions?