



EXCELLENCE
IN ORTHOPEDICS

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leading Provider in NASCAR Orthopedic Motorsports Care Seeks to Minimize Injuries on Pit Road

Bill Heisel, PA-C, OrthoCarolina and team have developed the Motorsports Injury Database Tracking Trends in Pit Crew Injuries

CONCORD, N.C. (February 19, 2018) – As the 2018 NASCAR season begins, one of the sport’s top medical providers is emphasizing the need for teams to focus on minimizing the number of injuries on pit road. Bill Heisel, PA-C, Director of Motorsports with OrthoCarolina, suggests that recent NASCAR rule changes mean teams should carefully consider their strategies and injury prevention plans over the course of the season.

Orthopedic injuries in NASCAR vary between positions and can be linked to the demands of each role. With only five pit crew members allowed over the wall instead of six this year, Heisel expects to see different biomechanical patterns evolve among these athletes, some of whom will be performing multiple jobs they aren’t accustomed to. With the weight of pit guns and the subsequent torque forces generated, Heisel and his team have already noticed an upward trend in forearm and elbow injuries in 2018. Heisel sees a strong need for teams to focus on core strength and flexibility in an attempt to prevent injury over the course of a 38-week season.

“Being on a NASCAR pit crew has always required a high level of athleticism, but fewer crew over the wall means tire carriers may be jacking cars and jack men may be hanging tires,” says Heisel, who oversees the OrthoCarolina Motorsports medical program, athlete care and works with many NASCAR teams and drivers on a daily basis. “It’s important to be vigilant about potential unanticipated physical demands that can place unwanted stress on the body.”

Over several years Heisel and a team of doctors have been collecting data and developing the Motorsports Injury Database as a way to track injuries specific to pit crews and mechanics. The database, which initially began as an upper extremity-only database developed by OrthoCarolina Chief Hand Surgeon Dr. Glenn Gaston, has now been expanded to include all body parts. While NASCAR has a driver injury database, the Motorsports Injury Database is the only existing resource that tracks epidemiological trends in pit crew injuries. In recent years it has shown a sharp increase in upper extremity injuries overall in pit crew members as well as hip injuries in tire changers. The majority of pit crew positions are at risk for epicondylitis (pain in the lateral tendons of the forearm,

also known as tennis elbow). Changers sustain the most hand-related injuries (42 percent) of all pit crew team members, while carriers are susceptible to finger issues (29 percent).

“We had a mass of data that we were collecting as we cared for these Motorsports athletes at all levels and it made sense to create a convenient, efficient way to look at that data for research purposes to observe injury trends within the sport,” says Heisel. “Leagues like the NFL have a database on all their injuries; NASCAR likewise is a spectator sport with a large global presence that can benefit from information that will help teams find ways to develop pit road strategies that will prevent injuries.”

During the 2017-2018 NASCAR offseason, the OrthoCarolina Motorsports program oversaw 78 total surgical procedures on 75 individuals affiliated with Motorsports.

OrthoCarolina Motorsports provides care in team race shops during the week and trackside at races during the NASCAR season, including management of chronic, acute and major injuries, athletic training and physical therapy services, and specialist and primary care referrals. In its entirety the service line oversees medical care for NASCAR pit crews, drivers, team employees and officials as well as many of their family members. OrthoCarolina Motorsports has formal relationships with Hendrick Motorsports, Stewart-Haas Racing, Roush Fenway Racing, JTG Racing, Joe Gibbs Racing and XCalibur Pit School.

About OrthoCarolina

With expert physicians and care providers in locations throughout our region, OrthoCarolina is one of the nation’s leading orthopedic practices and your destination for comprehensive orthopedic care. Our expertise in the areas of foot and ankle, hand, hip and knee, shoulder and elbow, spine, sports medicine and pediatrics to offer a continuum of care unmatched in our region — and throughout the country.

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