

# Knee Injuries Reduced, When Soccer Coaches Help with Training



By Erik Lief — February 8, 2017



Knee injuries are common with teen soccer players (photo courtesy: Shutterstock) [1]

One of the biggest health threats that young soccer players face are injuries to their knee ligaments. These are painful, and they can also be a harbinger of continued problems for years to come.

But results of a new study may have identified a new way to protect players better, by getting information about proper preventative care to coaches – the adults on the field closest to the youngsters. And that crucial information can be delivered to coaches in just 90 minutes.

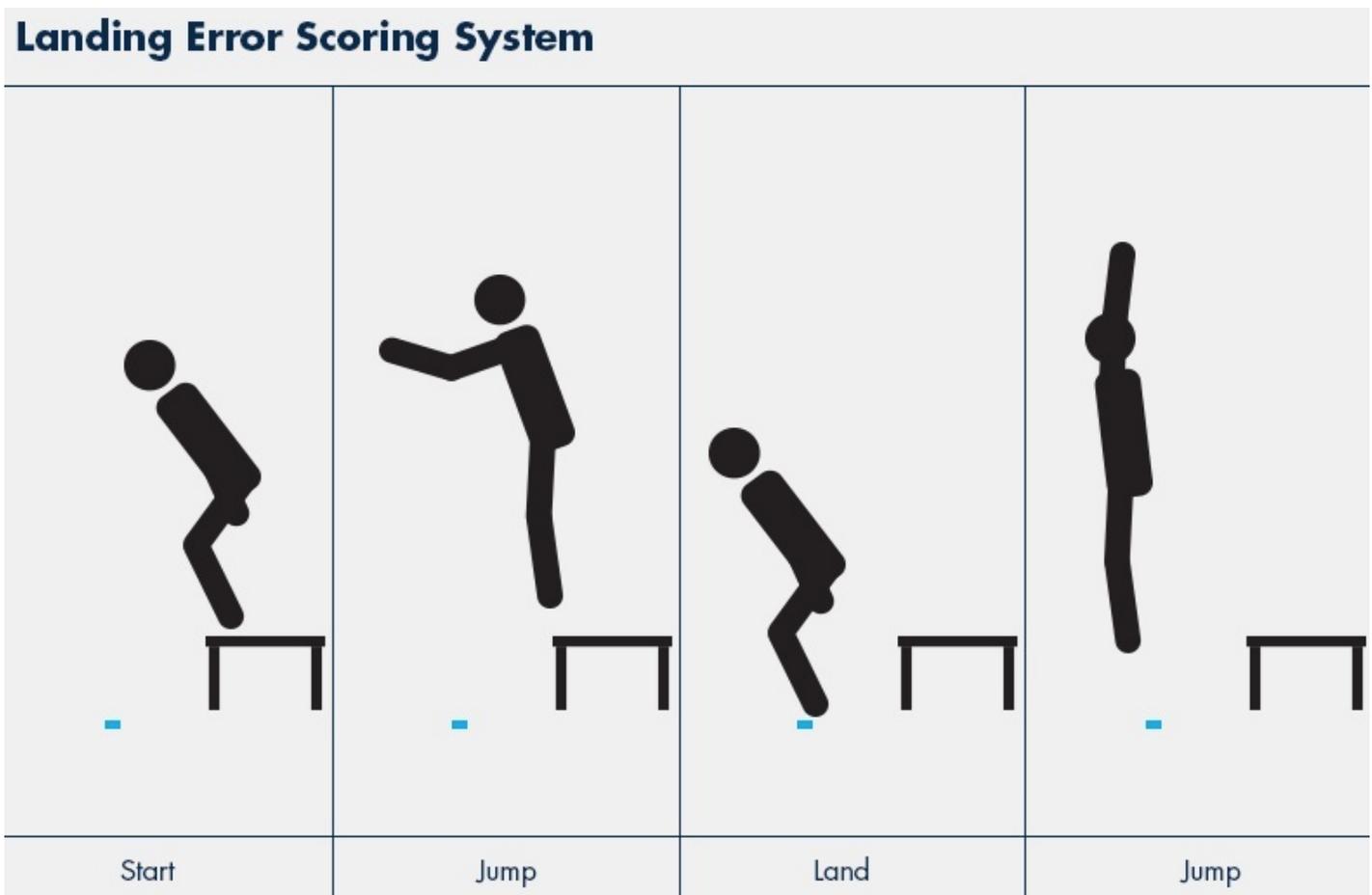
Researchers, teaming up from three colleges and universities, determined that "when coaches receive even a small amount of education about preventive training, they can be as effective as professional athletic trainers at mitigating poor movement behavior and preventing injury in young soccer athletes."

That's the important takeaway from a [new study](#) [2] titled "Coach-led preventive training program in youth soccer players improves movement technique," recently published in the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. The training can also help reduce injuries and tears to the anterior cruciate ligament, or ACL.

"Whether it's a health care professional or a head coach who implements the program, it doesn't appear to make a difference, as long as the coach is properly trained," according to Luke Pryor, PhD, an assistant professor at California State University, Fresno, and lead author of the study. And that training, provided in a preseason educational workshop, can also pay dividends down the

road.

Dr. Pryor, who worked with researchers from the University of Connecticut and Drexel College of Medicine, added "if you continue doing this program through multiple seasons — as a normal part of your training — you'll see greater benefits in those athletes who have the worst movement control and highest risk of injury."



Twelve youth soccer teams took part in the study – which were performed during the fall season and subsequent spring season – and they were randomly assigned to one of two groups. Group 1 had athletic trainers "lead the teams through a preventive training program before every practice," while teams in Group 2, the control, warmed up as they normally did. "Two weeks before the subsequent spring season, coaches of all teams, including those in the control group, attended a preventive training program workshop and were instructed to implement the training as a team warm-up prior to practices and games," according to details provided today in a [Drexel release](#) [3].

Coaches took part in a training program called LESS, or Landing Error Score System (image courtesy of Drexel College of Medicine), which helps them increase the chances of predicting injury risk. To that end the players were instructed to leap off an object one-foot-high, and then jump straight up as high as possible – with cameras recording each athlete's activity. Awkward movements or other bodily errors would signal a potential problem, which could then be addressed by trainers using strength training and physical-therapy remedies.

According to researchers, the study's program showed an "enhanced movement technique for the majority of soccer players, regardless of whether the athletes played on teams that employed athletic trainers for preventive training warm-ups." Moreover, when results from the two soccer

seasons were compared there was no difference, "suggesting that well-trained coaches can be as effective as professionals at implementing injury prevention warm-ups."

We've written in the past about the [high incidence of ACL injuries stemming from soccer](#) [4], especially among teenage girls. "Overuse" was frequently the culprit, meaning that they played soccer almost exclusively throughout the year, which repeatedly taxed the same muscle groups and ligaments. So while the training in this study appears promising, coaches and kids alike should also remember to "diversify" when it comes to choosing other sports to play. Doing so will enhance a youngster's overall participation in sports.

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[2] [http://www.jsams.org/article/S1440-2440\(17\)30265-7/abstract](http://www.jsams.org/article/S1440-2440(17)30265-7/abstract)

[3] <http://drexel.edu/now/archive/2017/February/Youth-Soccer-Coaches-Prevent-Injury/>

[4] <http://acsh.org/news/2016/06/14/kids-avoid-injuries-better-by-playing-multiple-sports-not-one>