



7 May 2007

## **Don't Argue – Mouthguards are a Must!**

Injuries in sport are a regrettable side-effect that all involved do their best to minimise," Sports Medicine Australia (SMA) President, Dr Bruce Mitchell said today.

"When injuries occur unnecessarily, it is doubly frustrating," he said. "While the loss of a front tooth by Essendon player, Jason Laycock, during Saturday's game against Hawthorn may have been unavoidable, the fact that he was not wearing a mouthguard made it much more probable – and doubly disappointing.

"Mouthguards – especially laminated mouthguards fitted by a dentist – have an excellent record in preventing dental injury. Rugby Union in New Zealand achieved a 43% decrease in dental injury\* after mouthguard use was mandated – and enforced in the sport. (\* Measured by dental injury claims from sport (BJSM 2005, 39)

"The cost of treating dental injury and the paucity of insurance cover available for dental care in Australia are added incentives to take every protective measure available.

The President of the Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch (ADAVB), Dr Greg Morris, said teeth are at risk of damage when playing sport and can result in dental injury and lead to long and potentially expensive treatment to restore teeth.

"Mouthguards also help to reduce the risk of jaw fractures and concussion caused by a collision."

The main points that SMA and the ADAVB feels should be made from Laycock's injury are:

1. Mouthguards are a proven defense against dental injury and their use should be more widely mandated – and enforced - in all contact sports (including those where contact is not mandated, but can occur accidentally, such as basketball).
2. Players in elite competitions should set an example by complying with protective equipment usage.
3. Australia should consider the introduction of a sports injury insurance scheme, such as the one that exists in New Zealand, where ALL sports participants are covered at all times against all injuries.
4. Most dentists are able to provide custom fitted mouthguards. It requires a brief visit to take impressions of the teeth and usually the mouthguards will be ready within a few days.
5. The cost of providing a mouthguard will vary from dentist to dentist, but should not be more than the price of the latest pair of sporting shoes.

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