

Supplemental Table 2. Community Australian Football player views of the barriers and facilitators to following the guidelines (n=18)

Major themes	Sub-themes	Example quote
Factors that would facilitate the use of the concussion guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having the use of the guidelines enforced by the local league 	<p><i>Like, if you're going to be following the guidelines, you want everyone following you. It's got to be standardised throughout the league or district or whatever.</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having the league run an information session for all clubs at the beginning of the season 	<p><i>Like, I really think it needs to be drummed into clubs at the start of the season. Like, all players... like, whether it's the league that holds an event at each club stating what... just like the rushed behind it's all in the AFL now. Every club knows it. Like, every club's got to know this...</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clubs having a policy around using the guidelines and informing players 	<p><i>It's probably good if the player knows just that the guideline's in place. They probably wouldn't have to know the exact steps in everything they go through. Just that the guideline's in place and the trainer knows that he's the final call... and says if you can go back on the ground or not.</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the guidelines through the media and elite players 	<p><i>So, if the AFL wanted to get it, maybe...I don't know, tell the commentators (on television broadcasts of AF) to drum it up</i></p>

or something like that. Or put a thing at the bottom of the screen...

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- Making hard copies of the guidelines available and visible to players and sports trainers *I like the idea of like a say the chart put up in the trainer's room. Sort of just reminds the trainers and all the players will sort of see it as they go through there and the word of mouth once it gets up there around the club as well.*

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- Further education and information about concussion for sports trainers *Maybe it's a thing for all the trainers to sit down and go through these guidelines and make sure everybody understands them. So, that no matter who's on... when. They'll know exactly what to ask sort of thing. So, it's not just left to one trainer.*

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- Having an impartial and medically trained person to decide whether a player is concussed or not *It's probably important to have a proper medically trained person, designated person in the club... So you have confidence that you're not getting put out of the game if you're actually okay. And you want to have confidence that you're being pulled out at the right time.
... if you've got an impartial doctor making the assessment*
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of it. Sort of takes out the bias of the situation from the club.

Factors that would impede the use
of the concussion guidelines

- Increased pressure on sports
trainers/doctors to return players to
play

*I just reckon the pressure of the coach would be enough for
a trainer to say, "He's right to go".*

- Pressure from 'traditional/old
school' coaches and sports
trainers placed on other trainers
and players to have players return
to play

*Like they'll [traditional/old school coach] see their best
player go out there. Their full forward and they're down and
then who's going to kick the goals? They'll probably even
say to the trainer, "Get him back out there".
Because if you get like an old school trainer who's been
around since the seventies and that – they're probably going
to be like, "Oh you'll be right. You'll be right mate".*

- A close or important game

*Like, if it's last quarter of the Grand Final and say your best
player gets concussed or knocked out. Obviously the coach
up in the thing's going to say to the Doctor, "Look, just say
he's alright". It's going to sway him one way because in the
heat of the moment you're not going to put the best player
out when the game's on the line in the Grand Final.*

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- State of play (where the football is) at the time of the 'knock' *...say the ball's up the other end, it's probably alright for the trainer to come out and he can actually have a proper look at him. But if he's like five metres away from the play, the trainer's sort of going to rush out there, "Are you right?" And then he'll [the player] probably say, "Yes" straight away and then he'll [the trainer] run back off the ground. So he probably can't really make a good judgement in that sort of scenario. ...so I suppose it's hard like, being on the ground while the play is going, trying to get out the way and stuff to make a proper judgement.*

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- Players wanting to play and to win at all costs *And all this time and effort that's gone into raising awareness for the players and staff about reasons why they shouldn't come back on. But they don't realise that... it just all goes out the window come game day because the player...he's not thinking right. All that awareness stuff, he's not thinking about that. It just all comes down to getting back out there.*
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Whether you're injured, doing rehabilitation, concussed on a game day – you will be doing your hardest whether it's good for you or not to get back out there on that field. So, I don't know how you can stop that... because you can't really... unless you have a lie detector test, a polygraph. Players will lie to get back on that field.

No I had trained down in Melbourne and the fellow said if I wanted to play there next week, I'd have to get a clearance to play and... so, I did that and didn't get cleared, then played for the [other] club.

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- A concussion incident that appears less severe – a softer 'knock'; player gets up quickly *Sometimes if you've got a hit and you get straight back up again, you could be... you could just have the exact same head damage as if you stayed down for a while. But the trainer, if they saw you stay down for twenty seconds, they're probably going to be more careful and like, ask you to come off. Where if you just got straight back up and you just went, "Yep, I'm right", they'd probably let you go.*
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- Inconvenience and cost of, as well as general reluctance associated with, visiting a General Practitioner (GP) during the stepwise return to play phase

With this, just the timeline given like there should be approximately twenty four hours for each stage. In country footy, you're not going to have this time with work and everything else. You can only train Tuesday, Thursday. If you want to get up the next week or anything. It might...this might take two weeks to get through before you even... before you even get a chance to you know, go from like non-contact training to then in to contact, then to full training before you are even allowed to return back.

It's not as easily... like, accessed either. Like, at an AFL level you've got your club doctors that refer you to wherever you're going. ...probably a hospital where they send all their players. Whereas, at this level, like it's a fair hassle to have to get in to see a doctor. Because they'd be in there and out within twenty minutes whereas we might be waiting around for two hours just to get this certificate and you probably would have had to pay sixty bucks or something.

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- GPs being ill-informed about the guidelines

How trained are doctors in knowing or pinpointing [concussion]?
