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The Financial Implication of an Anterior Cruciate Ligament Injury in National Basketball Association Athletes

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Background: The financial and professional implications of ACL injuries have been well documented in National Football League athletes. However, despite the prevalence of ACL ruptures in the NBA, there continues to be a paucity of literature delineating the potential detriment imposed on athletes' careers following injury

Purpose: To quantify the financial repercussions subsequent to ACL injuries on NBA players' careers spanning the years 2000 to 2019.

Methods: A retrospective review was performed for all NBA players who experienced an ACL rupture and underwent reconstruction between 2000 and 2019. Players were matched 1:2 to health controls by age, position, BMI, and PER. Season in which players experienced an ACL rupture was set as the index year. Player demographics information, position, team role, draft pick, date of index year (injury year), contract length and earning during index year, and subsequent contract length and earning were collected. Player efficiency rating (PER) and annual earnings were collected for 3 seasons prior to index year and 7 seasons post index year.

Result: When evaluating the annual earning of NBA players with histories ACL ruptures, there was no statistically significant difference present at any time point when compared to matched controls. When examining the mean difference in earnings between the first 3 post index seasons and the 3 pre index seasons, both the ACL and control cohorts saw increased salaries as their careers progress, with no significant different present in the earning reported ($,1662,574 ± $4,685,411 vs $2,593,673 ± $5,323,361, p=0.79, respectively). When earnings were examined based on playing position, neither guards, forwards, nor centers experienced significant differences between the control and ACL cohort. It was found that for every additional season of experiences a player had prior to an injury they saw a 14.00% increase in earnings (Beta estimate (standard error), 0.13 (0.03), p<0.01). Additionally, for every increase point increase in mean PER of pre-index season 1-3, player saw a 10.74% increase in earnings (Beta estimate (standard error), 0.10 (0.02), p<0.01). It was also found that for every additional year older a player was the season of injury, players saw a 4.81% increase in earnings (Beta estimate (standard error), 0.05 (0.02), p=0.04).

Conclusion: Our study found that NBA players did not experience diminished earnings following RTP from an ACL rupture when compared to matched controls. Furthermore, there was no differences seen the time to acquiring new contracts, contract length, or contract earnings between cohorts.