I. Department of Sports Medicine Policies and Procedures to Mitigate the Risk of Catastrophic Injury

A. Introduction

A catastrophic injury can occur via a traumatic event or non-traumatic/exertional event and may include any injury which results in permanent disability or death. The goal of these Department of Sports Medicine Policies and Procedures to Mitigate the Risk of Catastrophic Injury (“Policy”) is to promote a culture of safety, reduce catastrophic injuries, and protect the lives and the long-term well-being of student-athletes. While recent years have witnessed a reduction of traumatic deaths as a result of preventative measures, frequencies of non-traumatic catastrophic injuries have remained steady. The purposes of this Policy are to (1) codify continued risk reduction procedures for traumatic injuries and (2) incorporate more consistent practices designed to prevent non-traumatic catastrophic injuries and deaths. This Policy was intended to be consistent with the NCAA Interassociation Recommendations – Preventing Catastrophic Injury and Death in Collegiate Athletes.

1. Pre-Participation Exams

   a. All new student-athletes, including freshman and transfers, shall undergo a complete history and physical examination by a University of North Carolina (“University” or “UNC”) Department of Sports Medicine (“Department of Sports Medicine”) physician prior to beginning any team-directed physical activity at the University.

   b. A primary goal of the examination is to eliminate any cardiac condition that may predispose the individual to sudden cardiac arrest. This may include, but is not limited to, screening with an Electrocardiogram.

   c. Each individual participating in a tryout must have had a physical within 6 months prior to the tryout. If the physical was performed at a facility other than UNC’s Department of Sports Medicine, it shall be reviewed by the applicable UNC team physician prior to the tryout. Any individual added to a team after a tryout shall be evaluated by the applicable UNC team physician if the original physical was performed at a facility not affiliated with the University.

   d. In accordance with the Department of Athletics and Department of Sports Medicine Sickle Cell Trait Policy, all UNC student-athletes and tryout participants shall also undergo testing for Sickle Cell Trait prior to participation in any team-related athletic activity at the University.

2. Sportsmanship

   a. No student-athlete shall make an intentional effort to use part of the body, uniform, or equipment to injure another student-athlete in a game or practice. The coaching staff shall promote good sportsmanship and discourage efforts to deliberately injure others.

3. Protective Equipment

   a. Protective equipment shall be manufactured and maintained according to performance and safety standards set forth by national organizations.

   b. Protective equipment shall be reevaluated at least annually.
c. When an improved and potentially safer product is produced, such product shall be evaluated for consideration as a replacement for older equipment.

4. Strength and Conditioning

a. All Department of Athletics Strength and Conditioning staff shall be certified by a nationally-accredited or nationally-recognized strength and conditioning certification program.

b. All Department of Athletics Strength and Conditioning staff shall be certified in CPR and AED use.

c. All Department of Athletics-associated Strength and Conditioning sessions (“Strength and Conditioning Sessions”) shall be evidence or consensus-based, sport-specific, intentionally-administered, and appropriately monitored.

d. Strength and Conditioning Sessions shall be introduced gradually and progressively, especially during the first four days of a transition period. During this time, there shall be limitations in total volume and intensity of activity. Transition periods may include, but are not limited to: (1) resumption of team activities after an academic break; (2) an individual student-athlete’s return from injury or illness; or (3) a new student-athlete’s acclimatization to the program.

e. All Strength and Conditioning Sessions shall have proper work-to-rest ratios which enable achievement of goals, but also allow for proper recovery.

f. All Strength and Conditioning Sessions shall be documented, reproducible, approved by a Department of Athletics Strength and Conditioning staff member, and amended as appropriate in response to hazardous environmental conditions.

g. Department of Athletics Strength and Conditioning staff and Department of Athletics coaches may be disciplined for failure to follow the above recommendations.

h. Department of Athletics Strength and Conditioning staff shall have a direct reporting line through the Department of Athletics Sports Performance unit and shall not report directly to a coach.

i. Department of Sports Medicine staff shall have the unchallengeable authority to cancel or modify workouts or remove someone from a practice, game, or Strength and Conditioning Session for any real or suspected health or safety reason.

5. Emergency Action Plan

a. An applicable Emergency Action Plan shall be located at each Department of Athletics and Department of Sports Medicine venue.

b. Emergency Action Plans shall be shared and rehearsed with all appropriate staff at least annually.

c. Emergency Action Plans shall be developed for specific events including, but not limited to: head and neck injury, cardiac arrest, heat illness, exertional collapse associated with Sickle Cell Trait, asthma, diabetes, and mental health. Emergency Action Plans shall also include concussion evaluation protocols in
acquaintance with the Department of Athletics and Department of Sports Medicine Policies and Procedures Regarding Sports-Related Concussions.

d. All Department of Sports Medicine staff shall, at a minimum, maintain certification in BLS and AED use.

e. An AED and other appropriate emergency equipment shall be brought by the applicable Department of Sports Medicine staff member(s) to Department of Athletics practices, Strength and Conditioning Sessions, and competitions. Notwithstanding the foregoing, an AED shall not be required to be brought to a particular practice, Strength and Conditioning Session, or competition if another AED is confirmed to be located where it can be retrieved within three minutes.

f. A rectal thermometer shall be part of the emergency equipment kit and shall be utilized for any individual suspected to be experiencing heat stroke. During Department of Athletics practices, Strength and Conditioning Sessions, and competitions in warmer weather, there shall be a nearby, available location for full-body ice water immersion.

6. Education

Education regarding prevention of catastrophic injury and sudden death in sport shall be provided annually to Department of Athletics Strength and Conditioning staff, sport coaches, and administrators. Department of Sports Medicine staff shall also receive such annual education.