

# New research reveals an increased risk of concussion-related injuries in away games

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With this year's Six Nations well underway, many fans of the sport will be keeping a close eye on their team's selection each week as the rugby world is paying closer attention to concussion-related injuries.

So far in the tournament, a couple of high-profile players have been in the spotlight after going through concussion protocols, including Wales's Alun Wynn-Jones and England hooker Jamie George.

New research from the University of Warwick has identified an increased risk when it comes to concussion for [rugby players](#) away from home, as well as increased symptoms, symptom severity and longer recovery times in professional [rugby](#) players.

Indeed, while general physiological factors associated with travel including altitude, fitness, loading and fatigue have been found to impact the likelihood of injury the effect of travel on brain injuries specifically has largely been overlooked.

This is an important area of further study, as concussions can have a profound impact on an individual, and even lifelong consequences. "Adequate recovery from concussion is also very important and may be affected by several factors [e.g., food, sleep, exercise) that can be complicated by long-distance travel," commented Dr. Michelle Miller, one of the study investigators.

The participants in this study include school rugby teams, a university rugby team, and a professional rugby team. The school teams comprised of male athletes between 14 and 18 years of age, while the university rugby team included 48 males aged between 18 and 25. The elite rugby team included male players between 18 to 34 years of age.

Teams at various levels of sport should consider the implications of travel on the management of concussions. This may include delaying return travel for those who sustain a concussion, allowing them more time to recover before returning home.

Researcher, Nathan Howarth, said; "This research aimed to increase the

awareness of head-related injuries particularly differences in playing environments, and while the focus on [head injuries](#) among the rugby community has increased, looking more closely at other contributing factors will no doubt improve the safety of players moving forwards."

Coventry Rugby Head Physio Andy Hemming said, "This kind of research is invaluable not only for our game, but for all contact sports. The recent proposed lowering of the amateur game's tackle height clearly indicates the severity of the threat that concussion poses to the realistic and safe longevity of the Rugby Union. A concussion is one of the most common injuries that we deal with, and it's one that relatively, we know little about as a sporting community."

"We must try to understand as much as we possibly can about this injury, meaning no stone can be left unturned. The research into the effect that travel can have on head injuries and how the likes of travel fatigue can worsen a player's degree of concussion is an area that will be incredibly useful to understand within both the professional and amateur game."

Dan Lewis, former Coventry Rugby player—still playing lower-level rugby, says, "As a player, it's reassuring to see concussion-related research being taken seriously. Recently we've seen the very real dangers that can stem from multiple head collisions, and how not only one's ability to play rugby but also the capability to live a normal life can be taken away."

"Personally, I have never given previous thought to the effects that travel could have on a case of [concussion](#), but that's exactly why research like this is so vital. We need to [travel](#) down every avenue possible to know as much as we can about this [injury](#) so that we can keep players safe."

Provided by University of Warwick

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