



## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE MATILDA'S TEAM PHYSIO

Girls FC have noticed that there's a lot of work going on behind the scenes in the Westfield Matildas' World Cup campaign. Nowhere more so than in the treatment room, where the team physiotherapists [Kate Beerworth](#) and Lauren Cramer ensure players are fit and in fighting form.

When they're not on tour with the Westfield Matildas, they're working as sports physiotherapists in private practice (Cramer also teaches Pilates and is a fan of knitting).

When they are on tour, a typical day for them involves first monitoring how the players are going on a scale of one to ten: how they slept; how they're feeling; how challenging they found training; whether they're feeling stiff. From there they screen anyone who are injured or who may have picked up a knock or pulled up sore from the day before and compile a not-for-training list.

They tape all the players who require it and then, once at training, run their warm-up, ensuring that all the major muscle groups football calls on—especially hamstrings and quads—are limber and ready to go.

The physios' job isn't over when the coaches start their drills, though, with the physios then working with players who require rehab—sometimes, Cramer says, this involves kicking the ball or being a boxing sparring partner—as well as taking the players for the warm-down at training's end.

In between, they fill players' ice-n-easies (cool-looking pouches that hold ice and that come with their very own velcro casing with strap to secure it to the body part as required) and treat players who pick up mid-training knocks.

The physios run the pool recovery session too, and as a side note Girls FC did find it kind of funny when we attended. Those of us who were wearing shoes (i.e. those standing on the pool deck: the physios and us) had to wear plastic booties, ostensibly so as not to dirty or damage the surface.

But we digress. Afternoons are dedicated to treatment and rehab, with Beerworth and Cramer scheduling the players daily according to their physiotherapy needs. Girls FC noted that this means pretty full working days for the physios, but Beerworth says they'd both rather be busy all day and have the night time free than having gaps in between.

It blows out of the water any illusion that travelling with a sporting team is easygoing and glamorous. It's great, but it's incredibly hard work, especially as the physios regularly have to pack up their gear and move hotels on top of their work days (we know for a fact that they brought 180 rolls of not-entirely-light strapping tape alone).

Captain Melissa Barbieri told us that the physios also get up and go to the gym before they kick off their busy work days—that's commitment and setting a good example for the team. They're

even a little bit famous. One Girls FC follower tweeted ‘That’s my physio, Kate B!’ when Beerworth was required to run out on to the pitch to treat striker Lisa De Vanna during a game.

Rounding out the physios’ job is recovery. As soon as one game is over, they say, they’re looking focusing on having players ready for the next. And recovery isn’t simply muscle soreness or injury. It encompasses complex, hard-to-measure things like sleep, nutrition, hydration, and requires the delicate balance of getting them all at the level you need at once. As Beerworth noted: ‘You can get up for one game, but longevity throughout the tournament is key.’

Part of the physios’ role and recovery process means collecting data on how players tracking throughout the tournament. Beerworth and Cramer measure five things on a scale of one to ten:

- Sleep
- Muscle soreness
- Desire to train
- Stress
- Wellness

They also measure the lengths of training sessions and the conditions to determine how hard to push players (or not). It’s something they’ve been doing for a while in collaboration with the coaching and other support staff, and it helps them fine-tune their process: ‘As with any sort of research, the more data you’ve got, the more relevant it becomes,’ Beerworth says.

Recovery too involves the dreaded ice baths, which, combined with the ice-n-easy, means the physios make their way through a not-insignificant amount of ice. The baths are aimed to be about 11 degrees (brrrr) and the players have something of a love-hate relationship with them: hate (or at least dislike at the time), but love afterwards for the amount of magic the ice baths work on their bumped and bruised bodies.

From what Girls FC can see, the physio room is also pretty social, with two players being treated at a time and up to two or three other players completing rehab in the room concurrently. ‘It is,’ Beerworth says, ‘a bit different from back home where you focus on and treat one patient at a time. The players all joke that I have ADD because you kind of have to be treating one player, timing one in the ice bath, and talking to the players doing rehab to make sure they’re doing their exercises correctly.’

Girls FC happened to be in there during the opening match between Germany and Canada, which meant TV watching (and yelling) was added to the mix. Oh, there was also a bit of heckling, although we’d say that the combination of all of those interactions isn’t ADD—it’s highly skilled multi-tasking.

So a few days on, we’re through the group stage and preparing for the quarter final against Sweden. Coach Tom Sermanni hasn’t yet decided his starting eleven. Girls FC think that’s testament to the talent of the players as well as the physios working hard behind the scenes to keep them fighting fit.

