

BALL STRIKE RISK ASSESSMENT

READING FOOTBALL CLUB STADIUM

JUNCTION 11, M4

READING

RG2 0FL

Date	27/3/25
Version	V1
Review Date	May 2026
Written by	David Parker
Reviewed by	Jackie Evans

Introduction

This risk assessment relates to the risk of any person who may be struck by a ball on a matchday or any other day when football or other ball-sport activity is taking place within the stadium seating bowl or pitch areas.

A ball strike will not usually be as a result of a deliberate act, but may be as a result of an accidental strike resulting in an impact with one or more spectator or other persons e.g. stewards, or other staff working in the pitch area e.g. photographers, ball retrievers (often under 18), members of the press or TV camera operators, or those with a legitimate reason for being in the pitch side area

A stray ball may also strike a spectator or other person within the stadium bowl at any time that there is ball-related activity taking place on the pitch area and balls are being struck by players or others engaged in sporting activity. This might be during a match, during warm-up or down, or at other times e.g., when people are on the pitch area and kicking or striking balls for any other reason such as half-time activities.

To support this risk assessment South Central Ambulance Service have also produced a Ball Strike medical risk assessment and a ball strike response document for their own organisation.

This risk assessment also highlights potential Safeguarding risks in terms of identifying specific vulnerable groups such as children and young people and it is recommended that it be read in conjunction with the SCL Safeguarding policy.

Hazards identified.

The injury potential of a ball strike varies significantly depending on how strongly a ball is kicked or struck, the physical capacity of the person kicking or striking a ball, whether the ball strikes a person directly, or as a result of a deflection from another surface e.g. goalpost or other equipment in the stadium bowl or pitch area as well as the physical condition of the person(s) struck.

A ball strike may cause direct or indirect injury e.g., by knocking a person onto a solid surface or causing them to fall and strike a hard object or surface such as the pitch side wall, or the ground. Other examples of related incidents might include spectators spilling a hot drink because of being struck, causing a risk of scalding.

Potential injuries which may be caused to a person by a ball strike range from minor to severe injuries (e.g., bruises, lacerations, head injuries, eye injuries or fractures), or in the most severe circumstances may even lead to the death of a person.

A ball strike may also lead to panic in others e.g., family and friends of the person struck, or to potential disorder within a crowd e.g., if struck by an opposing team player.

If a ball is struck or suspected to have been as part of a deliberate strike, intended to hit a person this may be investigated as an assault and referred to an appropriate body such as a member of the Football Club, HR department, or Safety & Security team - or (if appropriate) referred to the Police, if felt to have been a deliberate and malicious act intending to cause injury to the person struck by a ball.

A ball strike may also cause damage to a person's property, if that is struck by a ball travelling at speed, either directly or indirectly, by deflection. Examples might include broken spectacles or other individual property damage e.g., cameras, electronic items such as mobile phones, headsets etc.

Who might be harmed:

Club staff, officials, players and spectators / customers or other workers present. There is some potential for vulnerable groups such as children, vulnerable adults, and people with disabilities to be affected, but where aware and assessed mitigating action will be implemented to reduce risks identified. People with visual impairments may be especially vulnerable as they are less able to be vigilant for balls which may be struck into the seating areas. People with physical impairments e.g., in wheelchairs may not be able to move out of the way of a ball struck into seating areas. Those with other vulnerabilities such as brain injuries may also be at an increased risk if struck by a ball striking them.

Control Measures:

Information may be included within the Ticket Office for potentially vulnerable ticket purchasers to be advised by staff if they consider that they may have a vulnerability if tickets are sold to them in areas more susceptible to ball strikes e.g., behind the goals.

Information should also be considered for inclusion in online ticketing systems and on social media.

Clear signage advising of the potential for injury or damage and for individuals to exercise caution and to be observant during periods such as warm-ups, during match or competition play periods.

Persons with mobility impairments are in the vicinity of the wheelchair bay, with ambulant disabled in the rows directly in front of the wheelchair bays. This is an area some distance from the pitch area but within range of an errant and a firm ball strike.

Audible announcements recorded or live e.g., during a matchday program of activity prior to an event may help to advise people present of the risk and what precautions they should take to remain vigilant towards potential stray balls.

Clearly communicated protocols should be in place for reporting, recording, and investigating incidents of ball strikes should be in place e.g., Patient Record Forms (PRFs), HSE RIDDOR reporting (if appropriate).

The installation of netting designed or intended to reduce the risk of ball-strikes and to increase the safety of people watching or present during the pre-match warm up so offering some protection to those who may be working or visiting within the stadium bowl or nearby areas.

The provision of on-site first aiders or other medical staff and rapid response protocols to assess and treat injuries. This may include the transport of injured parties to other locations, such as a First Aid Rooms and the provision of an ambulance to transport injured persons e.g., to hospital in worst case scenarios.

