

THE SPORTS DOCTOR - Football Unsafe at ANY Age

It's one of the great debates in sports--what can be done about the concussion and head trauma concerns in American football.

We all knew in sports medicine the physical orthopaedic toll a collision sport like football involves. The brain injuries, the potential catastrophic consequences of these head hits? THAT'S DIFFERENT! Now that the reality has hit the sport so hard, parents are facing the decision whether to allow their kids to play at any age. The dementia, the suicides, the debilitated players - IT'S SCARY. I have to admit, that I've been a fan, and am still a fan (go Bears!) of football BUT-- now we know the reality-- as presently structured-- there is NO WAY to predict and NO WAY to protect the head from this consistent trauma. It's a "crap shoot," we don't know how many hits, how often, how young causes concern. Experts used to feel that numerous concussions were the concern, that those "bell ringing hits" we're the at risk concerns-- NOW the reality is no one knows how the "routine" collisions" without getting concussions per se will affect these young players.

The average high school player probably sustains hundreds of head-related micro-trauma per season-- how much is too much?-- NO ONE KNOWS! The powers that be, (and they are powerful from the mighty NFL on down), have been dancing around this issue forever. Hundreds of former players are suing the NFL about understating these risks in the past -- pundit after football pundit still claim that you can "take the head out of football", train players to "hit with the shoulders" ETC, ETC.

The helmet was thought to protect-- ends up its more like a weapon or makes the player feel indestructible, allows them to "hit like a missile". The reality is there is no helmet technology that can stop the violent smashing about of the brain inside the skull--THERE JUST ISN'T! If football is to survive, dramatic changes will be needed--can they go back to leather helmets (WHAT?), when players knew they had to protect their own head? Can we look at Rugby which is a rough tackle game WITHOUT HELMETS? Whoa! What to do? The incredibly violent hits and collisions have long been "the top of the marketing" (the videos--the John Madden team, etc.). It's a bummer, but it's the truth, "Football" as we know it is UNSAFE AT ANY AGE! Parents--make your decisions wisely!

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