
Football: Should Parents Let Their Children Play Football Throughout Their Life?

On October 13, 2015 a mother is watching her eldest son, Jimmy, play football. She is sitting in the stands with her two other sons, Jake and Jack. Jimmy starts at inside linebacker and makes multiple tackles for the team. After halftime, Jimmy's team is on defense for the start of the second half. The quarterback for the opposing team drops back to pass and then steps up in the pocket and takes off to run. Jimmy is in his pass drop when he realizes the quarterback is going to scramble. Jimmy gets out of his pass drop and bolts towards the quarterback. At that point, it is just Jimmy and the opposing team's quarterback, they are running at each other full force and finally they make head to head contact. Both players fall with no movement. Jimmy's mother panics in the stands and is worried about her son. The trainer comes out to the field and immediately calls for an ambulance. The ambulance makes its way down to the field and rushes both players to the hospital. After hours of Jimmy's mother and his brothers wait in the hospital, the doctor finally comes out of Jimmy's hospital room to deliver the news. News that a mother, brother, father, or anyone wishes to ever hear. Jimmy has died from a Traumatic Brain Injury. A few years go by and Jimmy's brothers are at the age where they want to give football a chance, despite Jimmy's accident. Should their mother let Jake and Jack play football after all they have been through?

Football has become safer over the years but extensive injuries can still occur. When football began helmets were only composed of one bar going across a players face to provide protection. Helmets have evolved to provide the most protection by adding more details to the facemask. Numerous parents still question if letting their child play football is a responsible decision despite the safety improvements. Although more injuries in football are occurring, parents should let their children play football.

Playing football at any level comes with risks. Three of many risks include head injuries, ankle sprains, and pulled muscles. Football is a sport where players are continuously running and hitting each other head to head. Continuously getting hit in the head can cause cerebrum problems which potentially causes CTE. CTE causes sadness, loss of memory, depressed thoughts, and it can memory loss of information that was previously learned (Baker,n.d.). In total researchers observed about 202 brains of retired football players. The researchers studied if any of the former players had signs of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. The researching staff spoke with the player's family members to have more information about them. The staff wanted to know if any former player had past problems with their head. They also requested all medical records from the players for more data. On average the players played around 14 years with 66 years of age being the average death rate. Around 88 percent of the former players had Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. This includes 99 percent of the National Football League players, about 20 percent of high school level players, and almost 92 percent of collegiate level players. Players who continue to advance in level are at greater risk for brain damage. The researchers compared the data they received from the family members to their research. Nearly 86 percent of players who suffered from Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy also had symptoms of dementia. Out of the players who suffered almost 96 percent had signs of comprehension (Chen,2017).

Incidents in which brain damage occurs can not be reversed, especially in football. The brain is not like surrounding body parts or organs (Baker,n.d.). Dr. Omalu stated, 'We are born with a certain number of neurons. We can only lose them; we cannot create new neurons to replenish old or dying ones.' Since brain injuries are occurring in football, parents are reluctant to let their children participate in football. At a Virginia college, studies found that younger children are more prone to injuries in football. Virginia Tech's research shows that children in the lower percentile receive more injuries to the cranium. The study found that 7 percent of children around 10 years of age had cranium collisions caused by a high impact or power. Collisions such as this occur more in competitive games rather than in practice. Skill players are more likely to get hurt than opposing positions (Pew & Shapiro,2017). Injuries at a younger age can cause problems throughout remaining life. New research claims that more injuries happen when children start the game at an earlier age. Beginning football at an earlier age can cause emotional issues and affect future behavior. Since parents have been warned by analysts about risks of football and how it can affect a child's remaining life, the number of kids participating in football that contains tackling has decreased by about 19 percent since 2010 (Pew & Shapiro,2017). Scientists in Colorado have conducted that over 499,000 injuries in football occur annually in the United States. In past years 9 percent of injuries out of the 499,000 required medical attention. Injuries to the cranium were recorded in the 27th percentile after 2014. The remaining 63 percent came from injuries happening to ankles, shoulders, etc. Based on injuries in high school football participation, over 67 percent of accidents that occurred were resulted from tackles, the remaining 23 percent resulted from blocking(Mills,2016). Football organizations have created safer adaptations of football in hopes to decrease injury statistics. Although, parents continue to question the safety of the game and their decision to let their children participate.

Including parents being reluctant due to safety issues, multiple school corporations lack funding for proper equipment. Some schools don't have enough money for new concussion caps that are put over helmets during practice to decrease the amount of concussions happening in practice. New helmets are being designed for safety issues and some schools do not have the money. Injuries are injuries and they are happening more frequently, no matter how they happen. In the recent 10 years, there is a little over 3 players harmed out of 1000 players hurt in games in all athletic activities. In football in high school, the average for players getting hurt while playing is a little over 11 to almost 14 players harmed out of a little over 999 players. In high school football the rate for players getting hurt during practice is about 2 accidents for almost 999 players hurt (Mills,2016). High school football has the second highest injury rate behind high school boys soccer.

The injury rate at the college level per 999 athletes is a little lower than the highschool level. College football programs are different than highschool programs. College programs have the money for new equipment to better their players safety. College football has about 8 players hurt out of 999 players. On average from 2000-2016 there was an average of about two deaths per year in NCAA football. Players are more likely to be hurt during games than practices. With players being hurt in games more than practice is because practices main goal is to figure out the opposing teams game plan and not hurt each other in practice. When going up against a different team on game day is a totally different story because the opposing team is out to get them and they are trying to injure players NCAA,n.d.).

The NFL is going to have more injuries than college and high school football programs because of the amount of games the NFL play and the amount of players the NFL has. In 2017, the

injury rate of Thursday games was about seven and for Sunday and Monday games the injury rate was right around six to six and a half. On the brighter side nobody in the NFL has died on the game field. The game of football is becoming safer by rule changes. Even in foreign football leagues, players are getting hurt and the numbers keep going up from year to year. The commonness of head injuries leading to concussions in the Australian Football League has increased from about 1.5 to a little over 4 in a one year span. Concussions may encourage the AFL to change some rules ('Injuries in Australian,'2017). Because of all the injuries happening and the increase of injuries in football everywhere around the world, most football committees are changing rules and penalties to help prevent injury.

Football committees have been changing rules and making the game safer at all levels. The standard for safety in high school football got people's attention in 2015 when there were about 10 deaths in the nation during that football season. Before that researchers released an article that said college players had half the amount of concussions as high school football. Leader of NATA said high school players are more structurally ready for physical athletics than in recent years (Mills,2016). All levels of football have added a targeting the head penalty. When a player leads with their head and hit the other player in the head, this penalty is called. Whenever this penalty is committed is committed that player will miss the next game even if it is a more important game. It might even be the players first game of the next season . When this penalty is called the refs have to go back and look over the penalty. Targeting the head penalty has been changed in 2019. In previous years if the player targets the head, that player has to sit out the next half of the game ('Important Rule,'2019). But in 2019 the refs have to make a call of two choices. Either the ruling on the field is confirmed or overturned. The call of the play stands will not be able to be called anymore. In college football a blindside block penalty has been inserted and it is when a player hits a player when the opponent can not see the player coming. The only illegal part about a blindside block is when the player targets the head area. As of 2019, the rule has changed. The blindside block is now completely illegal, no matter where the player hits his opponent. The blindside block has turned into a personal foul and it will cost a team that commits the penalty fifteen yards. Changes are also happening in the NFL ('Important Rule,'2019).

The NFL has been making a lot more changes to their rules because of the increase in injuries to the head. Also the NFL can detect more of these injuries because of the technology they have. New rules of safety have come into the National Football League. During games, each team has a trainer that spots players who have been injured from a brain injury. With the injury spotters, hopefully the injuries are recognized earlier and then the trainers can take action earlier. Also the NFL has changed the kickoff from the 30-yard line to the 35-yard line. They also moved the touchback yard line to the 25-yard line instead of the 20-yard line. Closing down the distance is trying to cut back on injuries because the dangers of kickoff and kickoff return is not safe. The National Football League edited this rule in efforts to make kickoff and kickoff return safer. Again the NFL put in another change in the rule book. It is called the, CHR, crown to the head rule. CHR limits head to head contact in football. When a person carrying the ball gets hit by the defender directly in the head. This type of play is not prohibited in the NFL. When a player goes against this rule it cause a 15-yard penalty. This new rule decreases the chance of a player on defense to get a concussion from about 28 percent to around 31 percent. Also decreases injuries to the neck region to about 35 percent. Only bad thing about his new change is that it makes players target the lower region of the body. Targeting the lower body can now cause bad things to happen to it (Pew & Shapiro,2017). Not only in the NFL are they changing that but they are all over the world.

For instance the CFL, Canadian Football League, has increased penalties due to a recent injury. The CFL put a higher penalty consequence on a roughing the passer penalty. The CFL changed it from a 15-yard foul to a 25-yard penalty. The penalty is only called if the quarterback does not lower his head to get the call get called on purpose. The Command Centre helps refs spot headshots and injuries. The CFL released new rules for safety('CFL Releases,'n.d.). The CFL plans to put more rules into effect. Safety in the CFL is becoming a big problem not just in the CFL but in every football league. "These changes will improve player health and safety and our committee is grateful to the Governors for their unanimous approval," says the president of the CFL. Even though injuries are very common in football, there still is a positive side to football.

Football can teach the young women and men that play the sport very valuable life lessons and football can also be a very healthy exercise. Football gives players life lessons like working together as a team, which makes players not selfish, how to work as a team and social expertise. The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency says playing football helps players all around. Keeps the players out of trouble (Griffis,2018). Football is a game that the players win and lose and winning has a better feeling to it but losing is where the players grow the most. Losing can teach players how to cope with sorrow and failure. Football teaches players to listen to detail and how to be disciplined. Following the orders of football can teach players how to control tempers. In football, the players work a lot of different muscles. From lifting weights to running, jogging, and sprinting. Football is good for the players physical condition as long as the players stay healthy. Football helps players stay focused. Football does several positive things for the body as in keeping the player in better shape than what they were in. It will decrease the chances of cardiovascular problems, and other diseases according to the Harvard School of Public Health. Football can possibly cause a loss of weight (Griffis,2018). On average a person should at least exercise for 30 minutes a day. Football has big impacts on player's lives. Getting the player's fitness time in about 149 minutes is easily accomplished by playing football. Although football is good for the players. The player's height and size and if he or she is mature enough can affect each player. There is a lot of life lessons and benefits that come along while playing football (Griffis,2018).

The game of football comes with numerous risks of injury but also comes with life lessons. Learning life lessons is crucial for growing children therefore parents should let their children play football. Football can potentially cause negative side effects, like Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. Highschool players are at more of a risk because of lack of money. Some highschools do not have enough money for up to date equipment, which can put the players at a higher risk. This goes along with youth football programs to, sometimes the programs do not have enough money for all the correct equipment. The lack of money is a big problem for youth football programs because it puts the players at a higher risk and some of these injuries can cause life long suffering. With the increase of injuries to the brain and head, a lot of football committees are changing rules to decrease the injury numbers and make the game as safe as possible. Canadian football put a higher consequence on a penalty because of an injury that had happened recently. The NFL recently has made the kickoff distance closer to slow down the speeds of grown men running at each other full speed. Put a new CHR in the game, this rule is similar to the one in the Canadian Football league. The NFL also added an injury spotter. College football added a blindside blocking rule and all levels have added a targeting the head penalty. With the players being at risk for injury there is a great deal of positive to football also. Football exercises multiple parts of the body than any other sport. Football comes with a lot of negative sides that can stay with the players throughout their life and football also

comes with a lot of positives that can teach life lessons. Football can teach players life lessons like losing, when playing football it comes with losing and losing can not defeat the players whole attitude just like in life. In life it also comes with losing and the players can't let it defeat them and make them give up. Not everybody knows each other backstory and every parent has their reasoning. At the end of the day it is the parents choice whether or not their children can take part in football.

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