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Even The Finer Things In Life Backfire

Every football game is potentially a killer one. Even though many rules and regulations are in place to protect players things don't always happen as planned. One wrong tackle, or even one step to many could lead to a serious head injury that years down the line could kill someone; Additionally players past and present could develop mental health issues that could persuade them towards self harm. For most U.S. citizens football is practically apart of his or her life. Americans know there can be serious consequences with playing a physical sport like American football throughout any level from youth to even professional. Keeping anything you love will need many steps taken now and till the end of time it seems to protect it and others that could be involved. To truly keep professional, college, high school, and youth tackle football around for a longer time educating parents and young adults on more of the inherent dangers of the sport, technological advances in equipment to protect the players, and additional advances in medical treatments to help diagnose and treat said injuries are absolutely necessary.

Plenty of parents in the U.S. may not know about every risk of playing football. There is a tragic truth about American football and that is people can and have died. According to the article "The Tragic Risks of American Football," by Sean Gregory, in the 2013-2014 academic school year eight people died playing American football. No other sport has even come close to killing even one athlete in that timespan. It was also revealed that The Institute of Medicine

computed the data and found out that high school football alone has a 78% higher concussion rate than college (Gregory). Roughly about the time I started playing high school football a young man by the name of Chad Stover died from a severe head injury November 14, 2014 (less than a week after his 17th birthday on November 8th). Even the seemingly smallest injuries can be caused by overworking them in practice/training.

Overuse of muscles like the back, concussions, knee injuries, and heat related injuries like heat strokes can affect a football athlete even of the highest caliber. From a article “Common Sports Injuries and Sports Injury Prevention Tips, ” by the Department of Orthopedics and Sports Medicine at the University of Washington most of the injuries they listed for football can help be prevented by multiple things coaches, players, and even parents could do and accomplish. Most of those things are: doing proper warm-up and cool-down exercises, incorporate strength training and stretching constantly, staying hydrated, wearing properly fitted protective equipment, and if any concerns arise about any possible injuries or ways to prevent them talk to an athletic trainer. Back when I played football at the high school level all my teammates and I saw our schools athletic trainer to help recover and prevent major injuries. Granted complete recovery from concussions is unknown Turlock High Schools athletic trainer had a system/concussion protocol in place to help make sure we were in good enough shape to go back and start practicing.

A plethora of advancements in technology have been made for sports in general equipment to help recover and train. In the realm of football protective equipment like padding for the upper and lower body in addition to helmets have been made. Helmet padding and impact protection equipment have invented to help prevent serious injuries as best as humanly possible.

Despite everything from the beginning of the sport to now things still need to be created and improved in order to keep athletes safer and hopefully avoid any more deaths caused by said head injuries. Working from soft leather helmets to the harder materials with padding that we now have vastly helped improve safety for athletes. Such as pro football player Haloti Ngata, who weighs roughly 300+ lbs., can approximately produce 1,700 pounds of force (Cole and Doucleff). Athletes can usually take such hits when the energy and force spreads across the whole body with help from padding, but unfortunately when the tackles are focused on small areas like during a helmet-to-helmet collision the hits become more impactful and dangerous. A article titled “Are NFL Football Hits Getting Harder And More Dangerous?” the co-authors Adam Cole and Michaela Doucleff noted that “. . .player's head comes to a complete stop much more quickly than the rest of the body. Inside their helmets, they feel G-forces five times bigger than what jet pilots feel when they pull tight turns.” That fact is surprising, scary, and made me glad I don't play football anymore.

A female by the name of Jane McGonigal developed a mobile smart device app called “SuperBetter” to help aid in concussion recover after she received one herself. Researchers from Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center collaborated on the study with Jane McGonigal with about 19 participants who had symptoms-headache, a feeling of pressure in the head, temporary loss of consciousness, confusion or feeling as if in a fog, amnesia, dizziness or "seeing stars", ringing in the ears, nausea, vomiting, slurred speech, delayed response to questions, appearing dazed, fatigue- after 3 weeks received standard care and an experimental group that used the application as part of treatment. Lise Worthen-Chaudhari, mentioned in the article “Study: Playing smartphone app

aids concussion recovery in teens,” had once convinced that they “. . . found that mobile apps incorporating social game mechanics and a heroic narrative can complement medical care to improve health among teenagers with unresolved concussion symptoms.” The app SuperBetter represented symptoms as bad guys such as headaches, dizziness or feeling confused; additionally medical recommendations were represented as power ups, including sleep, sunglasses or an academic concussion management plan. Participants/users invited allies to join their personal network in the app. They could also view their in-app activity and could send resilience points, achievements, comments and personalized emails in response to activity. Tech and medical advances are one in the same plenty of times.

Typical for the five years I played football, and hearing stories from friends who continued playing after I had quit, concussion protocols were typically: stay of the computer/smartphones, don't read much, don't go outside without sunglasses especially if it is a sunny day, and ease into exercising/practice. Now as time has gone on Kelly Bastone's article “The New Science of Concussion Recovery” noted that a hand full of concussion clinics and The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) have developed “. . . a battery of active therapies that challenge patients' vision, balance, and concentration. Standing on one foot, tracking a moving object, and other exercises retrain the brain and rehabilitate zones that may have shut down in response to head trauma.” Additionally Therapies were tailored to the patient's particular symptom set. Researchers now “. . . recognize six different types of concussions: anxiety/mood; cervical, which can lead to headaches; post-traumatic migraine; ocular dysfunction; vestibular, or difficulty with balance, motion, and coordination; and cognitive/fatigue, which causes concentration issues,” (Bastone). One of the UPMC

participant/visitors was a lady named Laura Fraser whose concussion spanned three types (vestibular, ocular, and anxiety/mood). The things she was told to do to help treat her symptoms included staring at a point on the wall while shaking her head, focusing on objects at different distances while people moved around her in crowded places. Her clinicians also insisted that she start exercising again initially for 20 minutes a day. While it had been a complete opposite of what she had been doing she was symptom free and cleared around December for more snowboarding. Lauren noted in Bastone's article that everytime she did those exercises she felt improvement; Compared to when she was told to rest nothing had happened and anticipation for something to happen out of nowhere. To Fraser the active therapies gave her a sense of control over the concussion. Science hasn't confirmed whether the advances can stave off CTE (Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy) and other residual, concussion-related damage to the brain just yet.

CTE and other injuries to the brain are issues that have been around for decades. Concussions are not just in football but also military, boxing, soccer, hockey, or even domestic abuse. Brain diseases like CTE is something that over time kills brain cells, affects people's moods and their lives in hundreds of ways. Many things need to be done to help those who suffer from Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and starting to inform people about it, helping improve technology, and improving medical treatments is a start. Don't write off going to a doctor or clinic that specialises in concussions because they could potentially save your life.

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