

The Concussion Epidemic by Ryan Lee

In the NFL, there is an average of nearly 9 concussions every week. Research indicates that multiple concussions may lead to dementia and serious brain damage. Brain trauma can change a person entirely; they could go from being a joyous, cheerful person to an angry, temperamental one. If the NFL created a new and improved helmet with modern technology, it would prevent the fans' favorite players from being temporarily or even permanently incapacitated.

According to CNN, today's helmet safety standards don't take the modern understanding of concussion risks into account for their helmet designs. Kansas's leading scorer Nick Lowery wrote to CNN about his experiences. "When I played football, suffering a concussion was often shrugged off as merely having your "bell rung". My teammates had no shortage of toughness and wanted to build the mentality to out-tough our opponents. We now know that multiple concussions can lead to lasting brain damage and should be treated as a serious matter."

Helmets are designed to protect the skull, not the brain. Hines Ward, the former Steelers receiver, thinks that helmets are doing more harm than good. Hines said on the Dan Patrick Show that helmets are protecting the person tackling rather than the player on the receiving end of the tackle, therefore if helmets were taken off, players would stop leading with their heads. But, if the helmets were taken out of the game, any accidental head-on collisions would lead to far worse injuries and possibly even death. If the NFL did extensive work to produce a durable helmet, the risk of taking away helmets would be eliminated. Recently, neurologists have suggested using magnets to repel the helmets from coming too close to each other. I believe that if helmets were formed to protect the brain, the concussion epidemic would be resolved.

Some people fear that a "concussion proof" helmet may give players the confidence to go head-first into tackles. However, if a certain material was used to help absorb the impact of the players, it could balance the players' confidence with their own self-preservation. There will always be injuries in football; that is evident. Although newly designed helmets could prevent concussions, it should not give players the confidence to use their heads to take someone down.

Most of the time, players rise groggily after a hit. For decades, big hits have been referred to as "being dinged". It is an almost harmless-sounding description of what is often a concussion. "Sometimes, as a player, you have to be protected from yourself." Spoke Ronnie Barnes after reluctantly being thrown out of a game due to a concussion. If the NFL constructed a safer design, players would feel more confident and protected. Wealthy sports companies should invest money towards a new design to benefit the players we love to watch perform.

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