

National football league player safety



NFLPA Player Safety The National Football League has become the most exciting and thrilling sports league to watch in the last few decades. Most recently players have become much faster and bigger than in the past and the safety of their lives have become a risk. Recently the NFL has been subjected to a large amount of controversy and criticism dealing with how they have handled player safety. This issue has come to the forefront because concussions have become a weekly occurrence.

In the last few years it has been studied then proven by doctors that former players have suffered traumatic brain injuries from hits to the head during their NFL careers. As a fan of the NFL, I believe it's best for the game that the NFL makes some change so players are protected for their safety but then again you can't take away what the nature of this sport is which is a hard hitting dangerous sport. The NFL who is led by league commissioner Roger Goodell needs to find a way to make the game safer by keeping the players safe, fans entertained, and team owner's content.

As one of the biggest issues in today's NFL, I decided to pursue the question, are major changes needed to be taken towards player safety for the wellbeing of the NFL and the players? There is a high probability that a mutual agreement will never happen between the two but that doesn't mean that new rules and policies won't continue to be implemented for testing. The NFL has recently tried to implement new rules and policies to delay and prevent the highly rising concussion rate.

They have changed to shorter kickoffs to reduce high impact hits and have also introduced stricter guidelines for player conduct on the field which includes fines for illegal helmet-to-helmet hits deemed inappropriate by the <https://assignbuster.com/national-football-league-player-safety-research-paper-samples/>

NFL. Are these changes the answer though? There is more needed to be done than just changing a few rules that will ultimately have a small impact on this large scale problem. Many other strong options for change include equipment improvements, concussion research, and enforcing penalties to illegal hits. Roger Goodell said throughout history, football has evolved and become safer and better, and the future of the sport relies on the ability to continue to do so. When it comes to the priority of the league, Goodell made it clear safety comes first” (SBNation). However the NFLPA does not believe the NFL is doing enough to protect its members. NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith has been demanding the placement of doctors on every sideline during games to help diagnose and treat concussions.

This issue has to be taken seriously because within the past year nearly one hundred former players have filed pleas against the NFL and want them held responsible for the players suffering from traumatic head injuries. Concussions are serious and they happen weekly in the NFL to players of all positions due to the tremendous force these players are hit with. The short and long term effects of concussions can be devastating to the human mind. Not only does the brain suffer long term physical damage but many players often suffer from long term mental problems.

A prime example of someone who had been affected by head trauma was former linebacker Junior Seau. Recently “ a team of scientists who analyzed the brain tissue of renowned NFL linebacker Junior Seau after his suicide last year have concluded the football player suffered a debilitating brain disease caused by two decades worth of hits to the head” (ABCNews). Junior Seau who had a 20 year NFL career was diagnosed with chronic traumatic

encephalopathy (CTE) after his death. The real question is what could've the NFL done to prevent such a terrible tragedy or did they not have the capability to control what happened to him?

The NFL has said many times that it did not intentionally hide the dangers of concussions from players and is doing everything it can to protect them. With the focus on head injuries in football being put under a microscope the past few seasons, the NFL is taking drastic measures trying to find solutions that will help in the future. New helmet designs are a needed advancement to help create a safer NFL. With improvements to helmets that will help reduce head injuries gradually but it is still not the lone solution if players continue to tackle improperly and go for head shots.

During 2012 there was an estimate of nearly 160 NFL players who suffered concussions during this season. That's a huge problem because recent studies link concussions to causing mental problems and has also been shown to lead to Alzheimer's disease. In reaction to this issue the NFL has become concerned about head injuries and has commanded the tests of 11 new helmet designs from five manufacturers in the last couple years. On the other hand, there is a belief that helmets can only do so much as concussions are mostly caused because of the gladiator mentality that the players play with because they want to make an ESPN top play. " While helmets are being designed larger and more protective, concussions still occur regularly. It's unlikely that they will ever be eliminated completely. Indeed, helmet technology has come a long way since the leather caps worn by old-time footballers, but helmet makers believe their products can only do so much to keep players safe in a culture that glorifies the big hit" (SmartPlanet).

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New technology in helmets and equipment is much needed for the protection of the players and should continue to be a building block for player safety. Rule changing has become a yearly tradition for the NFL as they try and create new ways to make the game safer even if the players and NFLPA don't agree upon it. Most recently, Roger Goodell implemented shorter kickoffs which moved the kickoff spot up five yards from the 30 to the 35 yard line to decrease injuries, but would now largely increase the number of touchbacks.

This rule change could have a negative effect by eliminating the job prospects of special team's players. " Cleveland Browns kick returner Josh Cribbs, the league's career leader with eight kickoff returns for touchdowns, has been irate since owners, citing the need to protect players from violent collisions, announced the change during the lockout in March. " " I don't see (injury) stats behind it, and that's what the issue was," Cribbs said last week. " There's no stats to back it up. Their intentions are good, but the stats aren't there to back up the reasoning" (ESPN).

During the last month a rule change that the NFL has implemented was met with high opposition as former and current players disagree with the intention of changing the game. The new rule states that ball carriers would be penalized if they lower their head to deliver a blow. " The proposed rule change for running backs might be the most absurd suggestion of a rule change I've ever heard of. In order to lower ur shoulder u obviously have to lower ur head. It's a way of protecting ur self from a tackler and a way to break tackles" (Matt Forte twitter).

The real question is has the NFL become too overprotective? Yes delivering a blow with the crown of your helmet can be the starting point of a concussion but is it worth taking away important parts of the game. The NFL is the greatest sports league in North America, but there are major decisions to be made in the next decade that could decide the future of the NFL. Ultimately, how sustainable is the NFL? With the hits becoming more and more violent and with players getting bigger, faster and stronger every year, how can the NFL survive long-term with such violence?

It might take something horribly tragic before the NFL will act upon the state of the game and make genuine changes to aid player safety. But then again NFL players understand the risks of the profession they chose, nobody forces them to play football. At some point, the NFL is going to have to force players to accept the risks associated with playing football. Nothing can make football a completely safe game no matter what rules or innovations are created. There will always be physical athletes forcing violent collisions.

The NFL can't take away the heart and soul of the game just to make it safer. In my opinion the NFL has to embrace the physicality of the game and assume the risks that run along with promoting a violent sport but they should still continue researching the causes of concussions for a future solution. The years ahead will show if the NFLPA and NFL can ever meet a mutual agreement to satisfy the needs of their players and their safety in the long and short term future.