

Dear Coach,

The issue of hard hits in youth sports has arisen in many people's minds. Many parents blame the coaches for these injuries, but that's not entirely true. Many times severe head injuries occur because of ignorance of faulty equipment. Although less contact drills in practice will reduce the number of injuries, in game hits can still cause serious injuries which can be even worse because player will hit harder in a game. This can be solved by a few simple actions. One step is to make sure the player who is injured is okay and have the players checked for head injuries. Two make sure all coaching staff can spot head injuries and know what to do if one occurs. Three inform the players know how serious head injuries, make sure all final decision to return to the game is up to them. With these policies in place, players will be safer on and off the field.

The first action to ensuring that players are safe is to take the players out of the game as soon as possible if an injury occurs or if the player requests to be pulled because of any reason.

According to Jegtivig, "female soccer players continue to play with symptoms of concussions." This could be because their coach left them in or the player fought to be left in the game. In soccer you only have a limited amount of substitution but that can be easily fixed with a rule change that says if a player is injured, they can be subbed out

with no cost to the team, if they stay out the rest of the game. This would give some players more field time as well as keep players safer.

The second way to ensure player safety is to make sure parents and coaches can spot and treat head injuries to an extent, this would not be a replacement to a doctor visit. However, this could reduce the severity of injuries, and prevent them with safer techniques and faster treatment. According to the C.D.C, “25,376 football players on average visited the emergency room with a traumatic brain injury, or TBI.” With players and coaches well educated, the number and severity would be greatly reduced.

The third way to prevent TBIs is to have players know the risks of head injuries. Many times coaches will “sugar coat” the severity and risk of playing, just to get and keep players on the team. We need to stop doing that! If this occurs, then players with a serious injury will request to be left in, and the coaches ,who are probably misinformed, will leave them in and another TBI is always worse when one has not fully recovered from the first one. The C.D.C has said to “remove players from play and never have them return to play the same day.” This can be extreme in some cases especially if there is a few seconds left in the game, but it is still a good recommendation.

All of these three actions will greatly reduce the players chance of injury and keep players safe on and off the field.

Sincerely,

: "Introduction: Facts About Concussions." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention., National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. 27 October 2010. Web. 15 March 2014.

Jegtvig, Shereen. "Girls Often Continue Playing Soccer with Concussion Symptoms." (JAMA) [Journal of the American Medical Association] Pediatrics, 20 January 2014. Web. 15 March 2014.

"Rule Changes Regarding Practice & Concussion Prevention." Pop Warner Little Scholars. Inc., New York Times. New York Times, 13 June 2012. Web. 15 March 2014.