

# The Brains That Changed A World Forever: The NFL Concussion Controversy In Its Entirety

It's not just a game anymore. It's not just two goal posts and a 100-yard field of green anymore. It became people's families, people's health, people's livelihood. It became so much more.

Decades in the making, professional's football daunting concussion crisis finally took its ethical and financial toll on the National Football League in 2012 when thousands of former players sued the league for concealing the effects of repeated blows to the head and brain injury during their tenure in the NFL. The league forked up a \$1 billion settlement and promised advanced monitoring and prevention of neurotrauma as well as monetary awards for any and all post-career brain degeneration.

## Where It All Began

It was a cold Pittsburgh fall morning. Dr. Bennett Omalu, the operating pathologist, was not satisfied with what he found during his autopsy of former NFL star Mike Webster. After weeks of independent research, he discovered Webster passed away to CTE, a degenerative brain condition following repeated head trauma. The NFL's biggest threat now had a name.

## Why The NFL Denied It

The liability, blame, and accusations the NFL would consequently possess had they not concealed the effects of brain damage to players overwhelmed the league to evade the controversy for decades. The NFL is responsible for over 110,000 jobs and would cost the economy hundreds of millions if forced to collapse because of the threat to players.

## Who Wants What

The NFL employs hundreds, entertains millions, and essentially owns a day of the week. The league has built an impressive monopoly over the providing of the American's population favorite sport, football. Their gargantuan headquarters standing tall in the heart of New York City is symbolic of the influence and pure hold the league holds over a vast majority of the American population. Following years of attempting to evade the concussion conversation, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell's and the league's negligence and ignorance proved to be their ultimate downfall when sued by current and former players regarding the issue. As stated in the sources' synopses, this party has perhaps the largest share of

stakes as made evident by its financial and ethical impact across the globe. A very large majority of the world's population is familiar with the NFL depending on their access to television, the Internet, or any sort of media where the NFL is found in every corner. On the other hand, the players' struggle between gamesmanship and livelihood defines their stance in the crisis. Many risk their lives with every loud thud of a hit but perceive their reputation and monetary compensation presides over all else. The tertiary stakeholder, with a retrospective and progressive outlook on the situation, are the medical evolutionists and technological innovators, which can be grouped together. Corporations such as Riddell and STAR are now pitted in a race for the coveted prize that can save a billion-dollar industry and they will consequentially be compensated in respect to the helpfulness of their innovation - the concussion-proof helmet. Fringe doctors, researchers, and leading medical evolutionists which may play a complementary role to this newfound desire for technological innovation are also an important stakeholder. Unlike the other stakeholders, this classification of involved parties are not dependent on the others and are operating on an independent basis.

## What Was Done About It

Aside from the concussion protocol as well as promised health care and money settlement to current and retired players, the league has taken proactive measures to preserve the future and present of professional football. The NFL has achieved this through the hiring of independent neurologists to clear players to ensure maximum safety. Medical evolutionists and technological innovators alike are also joining the concerted effort. Leading sports industry corporations such as STAR and Riddell are leading the chase for a concussion-preventive league and research is being conducted every day.

## Is It Working?

The restraints of helmet technology and failed fringe doctor experiments have hindered the move towards a concussion-proof sport, thus eliciting fear within league executives as the end of professional football could be foreseen. Recently retired Pittsburgh Steelers player, Antwaan Randle El, and 24-year-old 49ers linebacker and shocking retiree, Chris Borland, have become the biggest faces of league opposition and perhaps the end of professional football. Borland's first-hand experience and account entailing violence's vitality and irreplaceability to the sport and Randle El's extreme remorse in playing in the league have brought to question the integrity of the future of the NFL. As parents hear more disturbing side effects for kids playing football, the less will play – and without 10% of the current parenthood viewership of the NFL, the league claims “it would collapse” (O'Hare, CNN Fortune).