

UNIT 2: DRAFT EXAMPLE (Mostly Complete)

An important issue today is the risk of traumatic brain injuries in full contact football. Some people feel that football is too dangerous and should be avoided completely. Others believe that the risks are not such a big deal. While tackle football is a big part of American life at the college and professional level, as a country the dangers of head injury from full contact football cannot be ignored, and as a country we need to do more to protect our youth in sports from experiencing head trauma, concussions, and long term harm from repeated impact at a young age.

One reason I believe we need to do more to protect youth in full contact sports is that the possibility of long term negative impact does not come suddenly after a single major collision or hit. In the article “Even the Young get CTE,” The New York Times writer Kassie Bracken references a study of young contact-sport athletes, and states that “the researchers behind the study of the young athletes believe the more years of tackle football that someone plays, at any age, the higher the likelihood the person will develop C.T.E.” The article gives many examples how dangerous full-contact sports like football can be for young people.

Another reason I think that young athletes should be protected more from head injuries like concussions is that, as fans and supporters of sports like football and hockey, we have seen time and time again how scary it is to witness an athlete be knocked unconscious from a big impact play. In 2022, for example, when Buffalo Bills were playing on Monday Night Football, star defensive player Damar Hamlin took a big hit that left him unconscious and out for the rest of the season. In his NY Times opinion essay, “We Used to Care That Football Players Got Concussions,” Jay Caspian Kang states that ““Nearly 24 million people watched as Hamlin was taken off the field in an ambulance. The game was called off with viewers unsure of whether or not they had seen a man die on television.” Every sports fan probably has a memory of seeing someone sustain a terrible injury. Head injuries in particular come from the long term impact of years of full contact, even when no one leaves the field on a stretcher with a medical team. Even sports like soccer can be dangerous. Growing up as a soccer player, I once had a teammate that had to stop playing forever because he kept having concussions and seizures when he would use his head to control the ball out of the air.

Finally, when it comes to an especially dangerous sport like football for young athletes, there are alternatives that offer the same game without the dangers of head and brain injury. Despite what someone in favor of full contact youth football might say, flag football is a wonderful sport that is only growing in popularity. Flag football offers a wonderful and safe alternative for kids to learn and develop skills in a way that is safe, so there is no excuse for putting a child at risk when their brain is still growing and not fully developed. In an article in the NY Times about the rising interest in flag football, Clair Fahey states that it “has been rapidly growing in popularity. Since it is strictly no-contact, it emphasizes quickness and accuracy over physicality.” She continues on to say “The announcement that flag football would become an Olympic sport in 2028 further accentuated the sport’s rise.” The fact that flag football will be included in the 2028 Olympics is a clear vote in favor of safer alternatives to the sport. The fact that the 2028 Olympics will be held by the USA in Los Angeles is an even better reason for everyone in America to embrace safer alternatives to flag football more strongly at the youth level and beyond.

From the NFL to the NCAA, no other country in the world supports and promotes football more than America. As the face of this sport that so many in our country love, we should do more to encourage and guide young athletes to the safer versions of the sport in the crucial years when their bodies are growing and developing as athletes. It is not just a young athlete’s body, but also their brain that is being impacted.