

# Let the Kids Play Football!

Larry A. Rogers

**To the Editor**—Lewis Margolis has documented irrefutable evidence of the increasing recognition of concussions among boys playing football [1]. He concludes that high school football should be scrapped. As a volunteer high school football coach for 13 years following my retirement from medicine, I respectfully disagree. Increasing the awareness of concussions is a good thing. It has already spurred new avenues of research on concussions and strict concussion management protocols to avoid more serious brain injury. Sports medicine professionals have mounted a massive campaign to inform players, parents, and coaches of the characteristics of concussions and the risks they present. Lawmakers around the country have enacted legislation enhancing safety and concussion management. Athletic trainers stand at the forefront of this effort.

Any time a player experiences a sign or symptom of a concussion—or is observed to have sustained a concussion by a teammate, coach, game official, or medical staff—he is required to leave the game immediately, without exception. School officials are charged to see that this happens. The player is not to participate in team activities until the management protocol confirms that it is safe for him to return to play.

Tossing the baby out with the bath water would be a tragic mistake. The benefits of high school football far outweigh its risks. In a very real sense, the lessons I learned playing football 60 years ago got me to medical school, helped me through a rigorous neurosurgery residency, and made me a successful surgeon. For me, football was the most important class I had in high school. Others have similar messages to parents [2]. Football remains important to many teenagers. I see them every day.

Increasing awareness has already protected thousands of players from repeat concussions, thus preventing more serious brain injury. All involved are united to see the trend continue. The National Federation of State High School

Associations confirms that rules changes are aimed at preventing concussions [3, 4].

Coaches currently teach more appropriate blocking and tackling techniques, practices that will continue to evolve. State athletic associations nationwide currently are initiating rules limiting the length of full-contact drills on the practice field [5]. Furthermore, compared to collegiate and professional players, high school students are exposed to lesser forces over much shorter periods of time.

This is no time to take football away from kids who want to play. **NCMJ**

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## Acknowledgments

Potential conflicts of interest. L.A.R. has no relevant conflicts of interest.

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Electronically published September 11, 2015.

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**N C Med J**. 2015;76(4):272. ©2015 by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine and The Duke Endowment. All rights reserved. 0029-2559/2015/76422