

# Concussion Awareness and Prevention in Roosevelt Sports

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**D**id you know that around 300,000 high school athletes sustain some level of concussion each year? Head injuries and concussions have become even more prevalent as the intensity of sports increase each year, and concussion education and prevention should be increasing along with it.

The seriousness of head injuries is often overlooked whether it is due to lack of education and seriousness surrounding the topic or because people value the competition more than the possible risks and outcomes.

Educating students, faculty, guardians, and coaches on the possible head injuries that high school sports sometimes result in is a big step in the right direction. Concussion education and prevention should be encouraged and taught more at Roosevelt High School.

Contact sports at Roosevelt such as football, soccer, and rugby have the potential to cause many head injuries of different severities. Whether it



Elizabeth Saunders, Roosevelt senior and varsity soccer player charges and Ankeny High School player during a night game. May concussions happen in soccer as well as other sports.

is a mild sub concussive blow to the head or a major concussion that results in a three-month break, student athletes need more teaching and a better support system.

"It's virtually impossible to tell if you have a concussion right after you are hit and, in my experience, a coach asks you and gives you about five seconds

to decide if you want to stay in the game. Putting this decision on athletes in the middle of a game right after a head injury creates a no-win scenario where athletes put themselves at risk

unnecessarily", senior Elizabeth Saunders said. "There needs to be more education on how staying in a game or practice after a blow to the head makes recovery even longer."

Saunders is a varsity soccer player and team captain for Roosevelt as well as her club team. She personally experienced a concussion that took her out of her sport for two months and causing her to miss the entirety of her sophomore season. Because of her personal experience with head injuries she said she feels like "somewhat of an expert" but admitted that she knew nothing about concussions before it happened to her. With students better educated on post-head injury protocol and the symptoms they may begin to experience, long-term cases like Saunders' could be prevented.

"I have at least two to three players experience a concussion throughout a season," said soccer coach Trevor Neary.

Neary coaches the Roosevelt girls soccer team as well as at the select soccer club, Sporting Iowa. As a full-time coach and retired collegiate player, Neary has been surrounded by the physical sport almost his entire life. As a coach, he admitted his fault in not doing enough to educate his players and believes most coaches don't do enough.

"I definitely don't do enough to educate players enough on the concussions and the severity of

them. The typical education I give players (especially younger) in technique on how to head the ball, jump, and protect yourself, etc.," Neary said.

"I would love to see more coaches (including myself) making content readily accessible and sent to players throughout the season on ways to prevent concussions, ways to deal with them, and how serious they are."

"There is inherent risk in anything anyone does. That being said, some sports are more risky than others and sometimes athletes will display risky behavior in an effort to win, get the ball, make the block, etc., but the reward is not worth the risk. Injuries happen, but please do not shirk the rules willingly because you think that that will help the team best, those rules are for your own safety,"

Sam Pohlmeier, Trainer

Not only do players need more support from their coaches but coaches need support as well.

They should be held accountable and encouraged to take time to teach their players about head injuries and the potential long term affects they can cause. Many student-athletes don't

understand how minor blows to the head can accumulate over the years and cause life threatening diseases such as CTE. It is crucial that students are taught how to protect themselves and how to take care of themselves properly after a head injury.

"A concussion is a very serious injury and if an athlete returns to play before their brain is healed the consequences of that can be deadly," said Roosevelt's athletic trainer, Sam Pohlmeier. Pohlmeier is a certified athletic trainer and is very well-versed in the dangers concussions can have and how important concussion education is.

Many medical professionals, including Pohlmeier, stress that the reward may not always be worth the risk.

The downplay of brain injuries and concussions in high school sports is not only ignorant but it puts countless students at risk. Staff, coaches, parents, and students should all take initiative and educate themselves and others on the causes of head injuries as well as the proper protocol after sustaining a blow to the head. This way we can work together to enforce preventative measures and increase the health and safety of our student athletes at Roosevelt.