Concussions

Posted by logan - 2010/07/27 09:32

Head trauma, while not the most common, is still a very serious injury. Head injuries account for about 3% of all sport related injuries. The potential consequences of even a minor head injury make it crucial for players, parents, coaches, and staff to be knowledgeable in this area. Soccer's concussion incident rate is comparable to hockey and football. This is mostly due to the high contact nature of soccer and lack of required head protection. The most frequent cause of concussion in soccer players is collision with another player's head, elbow, or foot. It is also important to realize that a concussion can occur from violent jarring of the body and is not isolated to direct blows to the head.

Recently the protocol for treatment of concussions has been carefully analyzed. One of the major findings is that every head injury needs to be treated on an individual basis. There is not universal timeline for recovery from a concussion. It was also found that many tests such as CT scans, skull Xrays, and MRI could fail to detect abnormalities that would help diagnosis a head injury. A newly recommended technique for evaluating concussions is prior to the beginning of an athletic season players be evaluated using cognitive and psychometric tests. These tests are used as a baseline to compare post-concussion tests results. Once the player returns to baseline performance he or she can safely return to play. Children younger than 10 require more time to recover from head injuries due to existing neurological development. Returning to play too early greatly increases the risk of a second concussion, which can be fatal.

Heading the Ball

Research suggests that "heading" the soccer ball is not a contributing factor to acute head injuries such as concussions. Some soccer organizations recommend that children younger than 10 should not "head" the ball. If a player decides to utilize this style of play it is important to receive instructions on proper technique.

About the author;
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