Tackled On The Turf: Are Ohio High School Athletes Safe From Serious Injuries?
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Chillicothe Schools take athletic concussions seriously, carefully monitoring all injuries in both games and practices.

“[Redacted] was hit multiple times during a football drill at practice at approximately 5:00 P.M. Patient was visibly disoriented with some difficulty walking. He reports dizziness and drowsiness. He is sensitive to light and confused.”

One day later, professionals at Children’s Hospital diagnosed this Chillicothe High School football player with a Grade 2 concussion – a concussion where symptoms such as dizziness, blurry vision, confusion, headaches, and sensitivity to light or noise last longer than 15-minutes.

Based on a detailed record of the concussion, the athlete couldn’t return to the field for a minimum of two weeks and only if he or she remained asymptomatic.

Tracking concussions and using detailed records is routine at Chillicothe High School, but is it something that other Ohio high schools take seriously? That’s what Kent State Students wanted to find out. We contacted 24 high schools across the state. Fourteen schools said they do track all head injuries, seven schools said they do not and three were unsure.

Some schools don’t necessarily see concussions as a threat. One example: Youngstown City Schools.

Athletic Director Ed Matey said they’ve never needed to track concussions, claiming they “haven’t had a concussion in nine years.”

However, that isn’t the case for all of the Ohio schools we contacted. Two schools reported having quite a few concussions including Gahanna Lincoln High School. Athletic Trainer Paul Miller said they’ve already had seven since the school year started.

Miller is one of two athletic trainers. While the coaches are the first responders of any athletic injury at Gahanna, Miller is responsible for providing a follow-up assessment, but finds it difficult to track concussions when students aren’t always aware they have the injury.

“I may not know about it for three days until a kid comes in and says something is wrong,” Miller said.

But like Gahanna, trained professionals, including employees from the Cleveland Clinic and Ohio Health, work with some high schools to ensure problems like severe
head injuries don’t happen. Eighteen of the 23 high schools require concussion education and training for coaches, while five do not.

Our research shows two high schools use PUPIL training and four use imPACT testing methods, allowing coaches as well as trainers the opportunity to analyze the health of a player before and after an injury occurs.

Brunswick is one school that hires trainers from the Cleveland Clinic to assist with athletes. Athletic Director Pietro Demonte doesn’t hesitate sending trainers to diagnose and treat head injuries in both games and practices.

“We go to extremes here...these are kids,” Demonte said.

Of the schools that claim to have a policy, most would not send us one – including Brunswick Schools.