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Congress and NFL huddle no head trauma

October 29, 1:26 PM Sports Injury Examiner Patrick Halligan



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On Wednesday, the House Judiciary committee summoned the NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell, along with DeMaurice Smith, head of the NFL Players Association to testify on head trauma and its relationship to subsequent brain disease in football players. When specifically questioned about the injury-disease link, Goodell deferred to medical experts. Several witnesses at the hearing, including former NFL players and their relatives, testified regarding the true impact of concussions and other head injuries on NFL players. Perhaps the most notable was the testimony of Gay Culverson, former executive of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who is no longer involved with the NFL and wants to "make a difference now".



NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell testifies on Capitol Hill Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2009. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak) (AP)

We all know that football is a rough sport and that injury is a part of the game. The league does have rules in place regarding legal and illegal contact, along with education programs, penalties on the field and fines for infraction of the rules. However, most weeks we all sit back and witness egregious violations of these rules. We even go as far to cheer when our defender "cleans the opponent's clock" with an impact so strong that he will think twice about catching the ball the next time or trying to run on that defender's side of the field. We also witness our weekend warriors celebrating debilitating blows to their opponents.

YouTube video player: Ray Lewis Hit On Chad Johnson

The referees also share responsibility for the integrity of the game. They can protect players with the use of penalties on the field, along with fines levied by the League. There should be a level playing field in this regard. Spearing is spearing and according to the rules, it should result in a 15-yard penalty. Often we see defenders penalized for spearing and even fined personally (Ray Lewis fined \$25,000 for spearing Ocho Cinco). Then this past Sunday we witnessed Pittsburgh Steeler, Hines Ward, turning up the field, ball in hand, and hitting a Vikings defender with the crown of his helmet to gain additional yardage. It should not matter whether the spearing is offensive or defensive. The infraction should have been

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