

# Tackling in Football Can Lead to Injury

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It is not often that it is a good thing when someone one is let go from their job; but in the case of Kevin Everett being released might truly be a blessing. The [Buffalo Bills](#) released [Kevin Everett](#) on Tuesday, clearing the way for the former tight end to receive disability benefits for the spinal cord injury that ended his career.

Everett was initially paralyzed from the neck down after a violent collision with then-Denver receiver Domenik Hixon. Doctors doubted Everett would walk again, but the Texas native regained many motor skills, including the ability to walk without assistance.

Everett suffered a fracture dislocation between the third and fourth cervical vertebra. Axial loading of excessive force to the cervical spine has been documented as the primary cause of these injuries. When the head is in a neutral position, the normal alignment of the spine is one of extension because of the lordotic curve. With the head in a neutral position or further extended, forces of contact can be partially dissipated by an athlete's well-developed musculature of the neck. When the head is rotated to a chin-down position even as little as 30 degrees the normal cervical lordosis is straightened and the forces of impact to the top of the head are transmitted directly to the cervical vertebrae. When a player in this position collides with another player (termed spearing), the head is stopped, the trunk is still moving, and the cervical spine is crushed between the two. Therefore, players who use the top of their helmets to tackle, block, or strike opponents are at greatest risk.

This should be a reminder to all parents that despite the size and speed in the professional game, there tends to be more serious injuries at the lower levels of football, largely because the athletes aren't as skilled and the coaching isn't quite as good. Therefore, it is important for parents to make sure that their children know the [proper technique](#) to use when making a tackle.

For more information on football in general and how to properly make a tackle check out the coaches guide to tackling at <http://www.usafootball.com/pages/guide/coaching/index?id=16&p=29>.

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