

# Football injuries raise concern

By Jay Flaherty

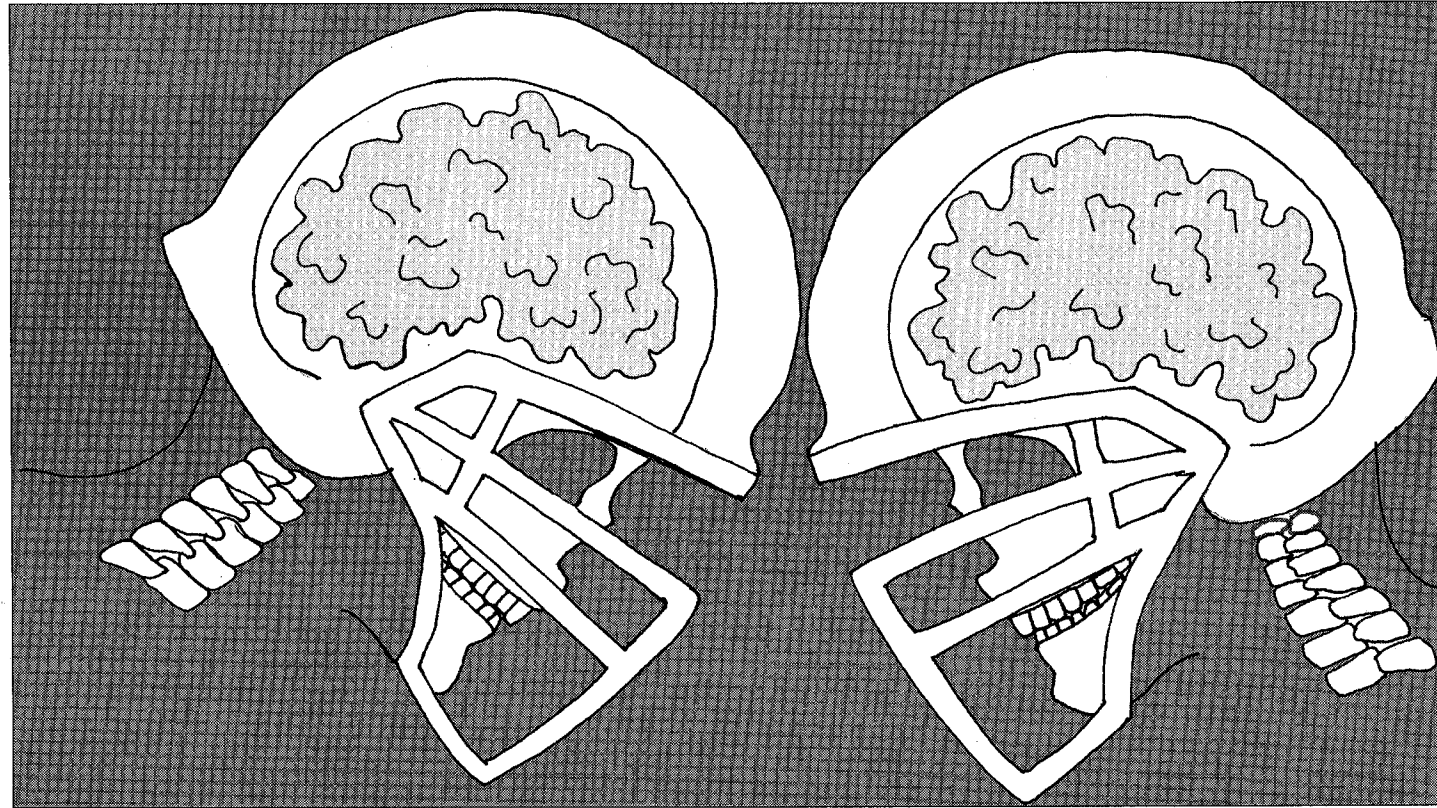


Photo Illustration by Perri Tomkiewicz

If you were to ask senior quarterback Ryan Russell to describe varsity football's Oct. 18 game against Novato this year, it would go something like this: dropped back to pass, looked downfield, saw a receiver open, and suddenly, looking into the eyes of a doctor.

It was just the first of two concussions that Russell experienced during the football season. These, along with a number of other serious injuries to football players, has sparked concern from parents as to whether or not their children are being given every safety precaution available.

"I had a concussion, and I came back a week after my first concussion and I got a second one because I came back too early," Russell said.

According to Russell, the safer helmet was fitted with extra padding, however, why wasn't he given this sooner?

Head football coach Jim Nelson said that it is a financial issue.

"Unfortunately everything new costs a fortune and our district wages are being cut back," he said.

According to Nelson, the helmet that Russell received cost \$300 compared to the less safe \$175 ones, even though the only notable difference between the two is more padding in places susceptible to causing concussions.

However, equipment is not the only issue that has parents concerned with their children's safety playing football. John King, father of senior linebacker and tight

tions about why it was handled that way."

However, Athletic Director Karen Barrett says that the incident with Nick would have been handled the same way had the game been at Redwood.

"If a Heritage player had been injured at our field, someone on our bench would have gone over," she said. "Every football game, whether it is freshman, junior varsity or varsity, requires a paramedic or a physician to start the game."

According to John, it was a scary situation for a parent to be in, and the district should make sure that it never happens again.

"We were in a strange town, and my son was bleeding internally

more consideration.

"It doesn't look like they're giving it serious consideration from what I can tell," he said. "Obviously they need better procedures if a kid is hurt on the sidelines with no one around, and hopefully someone with medical experience can do an evaluation on the field," he said. "I think Redwood and all the schools can do better. We have a whole council that is supposed to be looking at this, and I think they should

be looking at these things."

According to Barrett, she and the athletic directors from Tamalpais and Drake High Schools have been looking at IMPACT and received

The collision sidelined Rosenthal for the season, and out of sports for four months. He also decided that he wasn't going to play football next year.

"I'm playing soccer next year instead of football," he said. "I could play [football] again, but I'm choosing not to. I don't want to re-injure my back in football because that would be much worse than the first time, it could be permanent damage if I did."

Nelson says that his staff tries to prevent injuries like Rosenthal's with their weight lifting program that starts in January and runs all the way through the end of the football season.

"We're firm believers in core strength, so that's why we do such an extensive weight lifting program. That's the first and foremost thing," he said.

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end Nick King, has recently been pushing for better on-the-field care after his son suffered a lacerated spleen in a playoff game against Heritage High School on Nov. 21.

"[Nick] started throwing up on the sidelines and nobody had called for a medic," he said. "There was some alarm raised by one of the coaches, and I think he eventually got a medic that may have been in an official or an unofficial capacity. He was very unspecific about Nick's injuries and then walked away."

This left John and his wife alone to find care for their son, including finding all the transport for Nick to get to the hospital.

"I had to go run and get a golf cart to get Nick off the sidelines, and it was lucky my brother had a car there to get Nick to the hospital," he said. "I had some ques-

and he could have died there," he said. "That is an issue. I love football, and I hope I'm not going to stop kids from playing, but the program, district-wide, needs to be evaluated to prevent injury."

One of the methods

John is suggesting is a system called IMPACT. IMPACT is a software system developed by the University of Pittsburgh that can show when a person has a concussion, and in turn prevent that player from playing with a concussion.

However, John believes that not only Redwood, but the entire district needs to give tools such as the IMPACT program

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**Ryan Russell,**  
*senior, quarterback*

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are other injuries that have occurred to football players this season.

Ben Rosenthal, a sophomore linebacker on junior varsity, fractured two vertebrae while trying to make a tackle in a game against San Marin.

"I dove to make the tackle and the top of the ball carrier's knee hit the top of my head in full stride," he said.

a presentation on it a few weeks ago. However, she could not give information on whether it would be approved because the athletic directors are still discussing it.

Even if IMPACT was to be used, there

Nelson said that he and his staff also work hard to teach the right techniques. To prevent spine and neck injuries, coaches teach players to tackle with their heads up as opposed to down where they're more susceptible.

However, no matter how many precautions they take, Nelson believes that there is only one solution when it comes to safety on the gridiron.

"Don't play football," he said. "I know it sounds careless, but we can't guarantee every kid is going to be safe."

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