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### Why Players are Not Fans of the New Concussion Protocol

What do you get when you add blazing, quick speed with gravity-defying agility? A fantastic running back in the game of football. Now, throw in a little over twelve hundred rushing yards over thirteen seasons and one hundred career touchdowns: you have NFL Hall of Famer Marshall Faulk ladies and gentleman. Faulk was one of the most prolific ball carriers during his time in the league from 1994 to his final season in 2006. At a 5'11 frame and over two hundred pounds, Faulk made more than a few defenders pay for attempting to tackle him. However, it was not just Faulk's size that aided him in punishing opponents. Like many other players during this era, the league did not necessarily realize the severity of head-to-head collisions, something that has been in the headlines for the past few NFL seasons. But is it really as bad as everyone perceives it to be?

There is no doubt that the game of football has drastically changed over the years, but was it necessary? If a player knows how to tackle correctly there should be no concern for a player's safety. Additionally, there is always talk about improving equipment for players to ensure safety, but is it making players safer, or is it really complicating the matter even more. While concussions are a big aspect of sports in today's society, the attention needs to be turned to form and technique, as well as the ever-changing plethora of new equipment, especially helmets. Maybe athletic trainers should shift their focus a little bit to these factors, because they too deserve just as much attention.

Don't get me wrong, concussions are very dangerous, but with the constant scrutiny over them, people tend to forget about other factors in these physical sports. Take the proper tackling technique and form for example. If players always executed the correct form for tackling or checking an opponent, hospital rooms would not see nearly as many patients rushed in for concussions. Concussions can be avoided, and they are not really the issue here.

USA Football dedicates a whole campaign to instructing how to tackle properly. Step-by-step instructions are listed to their easy-to-access website along with videos demonstrating the proper form. According to the final step, the "Rip," players with their "head to the side and away from contact" grab "the back of the jersey to secure the tackle" ([usafootball.com](http://usafootball.com)). That was the final step in the tackling process. If you were curious, there are five total steps to safely tackling an opposing player. With extremely lucid directions as these, how could a player possibly execute these fundamentals incorrectly? And it's not just football either.

Hockey, like football, is known as a collision sport, two of the most physical, violent professional sports. Like football, it is imperative that checking an opposing player is down right; otherwise an injury may come as a result. USA Hockey Magazine states that when attempting to check a player, "Keep your head up..." ([www.usahockeymagazine.com](http://www.usahockeymagazine.com)). Football and hockey follow a traditional phrase that anyone who has played the sport(s) knows what it is: "hit only what you see." This statement has been passed down from coach to coach for millennia. If one hits what they see, there is no chance of them injuring themselves with a spinal or head injury. Technique can be taught as much as possible, but ultimately it is up to the players to play as they are taught, and if they are injured or sustain head trauma, then something has to be said about them not executing the way they are supposed to. Not only does the form

and technique come into question, but the equipment these players sport should be looked at as well.

Equipment is vital to any player's performance and health, every aspect: pads, helmets, cleats, skates, gloves etc. Each piece of garb serves a purpose: to protect players. But when does too equipment become a problem? That answer may lie in the new push for helmets in the sport of football. One would think that players would be safer with better-designed helmets; however, that may not be the case. Tadd Haislop of [sportingnews.com](http://sportingnews.com) stated that with the comfort of innovative, safer equipment, especially helmets, players "develop a sense of invincibility" ([www.sportingnews.com](http://www.sportingnews.com)). I could see a lot of skeptics thinking, *huh?* Why would better-designed helmets encourage players to be more physical, or more careless with how they play? Well, if the equipment is advertised to be so safe, then the thought, *Why would I play less physical if this helmet is better for me*, must come to mind.