

# CPA Patriots

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but power and love and self-discipline. 2 Tim 1:7

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## Is football the most dangerous high school sport for concussions?

**Based on all the news stories and recent Hollywood movie you might be inclined to say yes but would you be right?**

There are many different studies that are referred to that say different things about the concussion rate in football from pee wee to the NFL. However, most of these studies have been done looking at NFL players many of whom have been playing football for 20 years or more. But how helpful are these studies when you are trying to decide if football is right for your son at the middle school or high school level? There are approximately 1,086,627 high school football players in America and of that number 6.5% will go on to play college football, and only .08% of high school players will make it to the NFL. So when you see concussion stories or movies about NFL players keep in mind that they are based on a tiny percent of players that may not be very helpful when considering a middle school or high school players risk of concussion.

I am a high school football coach so let me say up front that I have a built-in bias but I am also the father of three boys. Two of which played for me and are now graduated, my third son is currently playing for me. So when I say that I have done a lot of homework on this issue, you can believe me that I have.

With all of the studies that I have looked at from various levels; high school, college and pro, it appears that the concussion rate among players at all levels is somewhere between 6.7 – 11.5 per 10,000 athletic exposures (an athletic exposure is defined as one athlete's participation in a practice or competition\*). How does this compare with other sports? In data collected by the NCAA 2009-2014 the concussion rate was as follows: women's soccer 6.3, football 6.7, ice hockey 7.9 and wrestling 10.9 per 10,000 athletic exposures\*\*. As you can see from this study it appears that the concussion rate in football is slightly higher than some sports and slightly lower than others. This might be news to you considering all of the negative press that football has received.

One side note is that it is possible that the number of reported concussions in all sports is low since many athletes, coaches and parents are still being educated as to the proper diagnosis of a concussion and what symptoms to look for. As our understanding has grown, we have become more aware of the seriousness of concussions; and what to look for. It is possible that the concussion rate of all sports could rise as we continue to be educated on this subject. With that being said, I personally believe that the concussion rate in football is going to decline overall in the next several years as helmet technology improves, coaching techniques improve, and certain types of hits are legislated out of the game.

What does this mean for you as you decide if your son should start playing or continue playing football? This means you should educate yourself as much as you possibly can and then make the decision that is best for your son and his future. I know firsthand that football is a unique sport that can teach young men life lessons that would normally take years for them to learn on their own. This is why I coach and why I am glad all three of my sons have chosen to play this game; despite the risks. We face risk everyday of our lives and it cannot be avoided no matter what sport you choose for your son to participate in. Make sure that the coaching staff of the team you are looking to let your son play for is doing all they can to educate themselves on the concussion issue and that they are prepared to deal with possible concussive incidents.

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\* The average high school athlete will average approximately 82 "athletic exposures" per season which equates to 328 over a 4 year high school career. The 6.7-11.5 concussion rate is based on 10,000 "athletic exposures".

\*\* NCAA Concussion Study: By The Numbers – Source: Datalys, a firm that tracks NCAA injury data