Head Injury in Football: An unknown perspective

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K-State Athletics, Inc.
Background Information

• Concussion Safety Protocol Committee
• As part of the Autonomy Proposal – Concussion Safety Protocol, the Committee is charged with reviewing the written concussion procedures and protocols (concussion management plan) of each member school from the autonomy five conferences.
• The concussion management plan should be consistent with the Inter-Association Consensus: Diagnosis and Management of Sport-Related Concussion Guidelines; these guidelines, and the two guidelines referenced under “Reducing Head Trauma Exposure Management Plan”
Components of Checklist

- Pre-Season Education
- Pre-Participation Assessment
- Recognition and Diagnosis of Concussion
- Post-Concussion Management
- Return to Play
- Return to Learn
- Reducing Exposure to Head Trauma
Common Sense?

• Final determination of return-to-play is from the team physician or medically qualified physician designee.
Demographics

- 22 year old
- Male
- Caucasian
- 6’4” 210lbs
- Quarterback
- No previous history of significant injury or concussion
- Severe road rash upon arrival on campus, ran over by a pick-up truck
Incident Associated

• October 2, 2015
• K-State at Oklahoma State
• 4th game playing Quarterback, 3rd Start
• Played Wide Receiver in HS
• Approximately 1 minute and 30 seconds into the 1st Quarter, QB tucks the ball and runs
• QB is attempting to slide and gets hit by defensive player’s right shoulder/upper arm
Concussion/Head Injury Assessment

• My thoughts as I am approaching:
  • Loss of Consciousness?
  • Posturing?
  • Cervical Spine Injury?
  • Is he alive?

• No LOC
• Athlete is looking straight up into the sky, attempts to talk but has mouthpiece in, very little movement at this point
• Athlete is alert, oriented
• Athlete was asked what happened
Concussion/Head Injury Assessment

• Cervical spine injury ruled out (with consultation from Ortho on field)
• Athlete was removed from the field of play and referred to Team Physician
• Evaluation/Assessment for Head Injury/Concussion by Team Physician
• Sideline Evaluation took place around 3:15pm
• No signs/symptoms of concussion per Team Physician's Evaluation
• Athlete placed on Stationary bike for 15 minutes
Concussion/Head Injury Assessment

• Agility and sport specific drills conducted post-stationary bike
• Re-evaluated by Team Physician, no signs/symptoms of concussion present
• Athlete was cleared for participation
• Athlete given more agilities and sport specific tasks
• Approximately 45 mins after initial evaluation, athlete was questioned specifically about post-concussive symptoms, none reported
• Athlete was continually questioned for the next hour and fifteen minutes, no change in status
Concussion/Head Injury Assessment

• Back up QB sustains injury
• Athlete returns to play QB and finished game with no issues
• Team physician mandates a follow-up evaluation 24 hours post-incident
• Athlete reports that he feels normal, no HA, normal sleeping patterns, and no post-concussive symptoms
Dear Mr. Thomason:

Please be advised that the Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC) has received a complaint alleging that you and/or the Kansas State University athletic training staff, the director of sports medicine, the team physician or a football coach allowed Joe Hubener back into the football game against Oklahoma State University after “an obvious significant concussion.” A copy of the complaint is enclosed. Because these allegations concern conduct that may violate the BOC Standards of Professional Practice, the BOC has decided to conduct an investigation pursuant to Section 3 of the BOC Professional Practice and Discipline Guidelines and Procedures.

If you have additional information, documentation and/or comments regarding the above-described complaint, please submit it to the BOC in writing within 15 days of the date of this letter.
On Saturday, Oct. 3rd during a football game between Kansas State University and Oklahoma State University, KSU quarter back Joe Hubener sustained a hit that forced his head into the turf and appeared to result in concussion (1st quarter; 13:23; link below). I believe that Joe Hubener sustained concussion due to obvious posturing demonstrated on the field and the self-reported neuro-cognitive dysfunction he described in an article posted in the Kansas City Star (link below). Although not in attendance, it is my understanding that Hubener was removed from the competition at that time. During the 4th quarter of the game, the second string quarterback sustained injury and at that time Joe Hubener was returned to the game.

I have no idea if the athletic training staff, the director of sports medicine, the team physician or a football coach made the decision to allow this student athlete who sustained an obvious significant concussion to return to play is to blame. If the decision was made by a Certified Athletic Trainer, I believe they are in direct violation of multiple BOC Standards of Professional Practice. Specifically standard 4: Clinical Evaluation & Diagnosis and Code 1: Patient Responsibility (1.2, 1.3, & 1.7).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdTLn2o_8i4
http://www.kansascity.com/sports/college/big-12/kansas-state/article38006622.html
Reaction

• WHAT?
• To Respond or Not?
• WTH!
• How do you respond without divulging protected information?
• Read Best Practice information included in letter
• BS!
• Anonymous?
• Chicken @#$!
• Stress factor arrives
BOC Anonymous Complaint

• If a member of the public (i.e., consumer, patient, employer, colleague) believes that an AT has violated the BOC Standards of Professional Practice, he/she can file a complaint. Fortunately, the BOC receives very few complaints against BOC Certified ATs. When a complaint is filed, the BOC complies with the Professional Practice and Discipline Guidelines and Procedures.

• Although anonymous complaints may be submitted, such complaints often are difficult, if not impossible, to investigate. Unless the allegations contained in an anonymous complaint can be independently verified by the BOC, anonymous complaints will not lead to a formal investigation, but will be kept on file.
BOC Anonymous Complaint

- Evidence to support allegations:
  - KC Star article and video interview with Student-Athlete
  - You-tube clip from game

- No communication/inquiry prior to arrival of letter
- Accuser admits to not being present
- Evidence to support their opinion is based on media/social media
On Saturday, Oct. 3rd during a football game between Kansas State University and Oklahoma State University, KSU quarterback Joe Hubener sustained a hit that forced his head into the turf and appeared to result in concussion (1st quarter; 13:23; link below). I believe that Joe Hubener sustained concussion due to obvious posturing demonstrated on the field and the self-reported neuro-cognitive dysfunction he described in an article posted in the Kansas City Star (link below). Although not in attendance, it is my understanding that Hubener was removed from the competition at that time. During the 4th quarter of the game, the second string quarterback sustained injury and at that time Joe Hubener was returned to the game.

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http://www.kansascity.com/sports/college/big-12/kansas-state/article38006622.html
Response

• Responded to allegation that Certified Athletic Trainer made the decision

• Sent Head Injury/Concussion Management Protocol

• Letter stating role of Certified Athletic Trainer

• Letter from attending Team Physician stating that the evaluation and clearance to return was Team Physician and only Team Physician’s decision
Social Media & the Armchair AT

• Supporting evidence presented: Newspaper article?

• Rivals school site message board:
  - 3 complete pages of threads
  - 40 threads per page
  - over 120 conversations

• Twitter
Tara McCoy
@tarammccoy

Don’t tell me we give a flying crap about head injuries when #kstate’s Hubener has come back into this game. Dude was GONE like an hour ago.

6:07 PM - 3 Oct 2015
Don't tell me we give a flying crap about head injuries when

Putting Hubener back in is arguably criminal. #EMAW
6:16 PM - 3 Oct 2015
↓ 1  t3 1  ♥ 1
Tara McCoy
@taramccoyy

Don't tell me we give a flying crap about head injuries when.

BW
@terryW09

Putting Hubener back in is arguably criminal. #BBW

Saintbridge
@Saintbridge

Did @KState_Football just put in a player who was knocked out earlier in the game (Hubener)? #KState

6:10 PM - 3 Oct 2015

3 retweets 1 like
Tara McCoy
@teramccoy
Don't tell me we give a flying crap about head injuries when
putting Hubner back in is arguably criminal. #KState

BW
@BW6603

Sunbridge
@sunbridge

Brent Siemens
@kcwillie1224

@KellsRobinett they can't run any of their QB run stuff. It's obvious that Huebner had a concussion, and they don't want him hit again.

6:14 PM - 3 Oct 2015 - Kansas City, MO, United States
John E. Hoover: OU just the latest school to not follow Big 12's new concussion policy
Oklahoma on Saturday, November 21, 2015. Mayfield did not play the second half because of concussion like symptoms. IAN MAULE/Tulsa World

NORMAN — Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield took a violent helmet-to-helmet hit on Saturday night against TCU and did sustain a concussion, but then stayed in the game and actually returned to lead three more Sooner possessions before being removed at halftime. That is a direct violation of the Big 12 Conference’s recently enacted concussion policy.

On the heels of similar legislation put forth last year by the Big Ten Conference and the Southeastern Conference, the Big 12 last February put in place a firm concussion policy that mandates the immediate removal of a student-athlete who displays “any signs or symptoms or behaviors consistent with concussion.”

Mayfield played 29 more plays before a halftime examination revealed he had a headache and ringing in his ears and was formally diagnosed with a concussion.

Sadly, Mayfield’s situation is hardly the first this season in which a Big 12 football player suffered a head injury and was allowed to continue playing.
Final Thoughts

- Documentation of every step is CRITICAL!

- Anonymous complaints are ___________

- A spectator has a voice, regardless of expertise

- Will social media/media impact one’s decision making?