

Headgear reduces concussions in high school girls' lacrosse

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High school girls lacrosse players who wear headgear are significantly less likely to sustain concussions, according to a landmark research project. George Mason University professor Shane V. Caswell, along with other researchers, presented the three-year study earlier this semester at the American Academy of Pediatrics' National Conference.

"Girls' lacrosse is the fastest growing high [school](#) team sport in the United States," said Caswell, executive director of Mason's Sports Medicine Assessment, Research and Testing (SMART) Laboratory and a professor in the College of Education and Human Development's Athletic Training Education Program. "There is considerable debate if mandating headgear will lower the risk of [concussion](#) but little data to inform [decision makers](#), so we were interested in studying whether wearing headgear would reduce concussions."

Caswell said the study shows "that headgear could have a protective benefit to reduce concussion in girls' high school lacrosse.

"That being said, we still need to do more research to understand the interrelationship between rules enforcement and the use of protective equipment," Caswell said.

In addition, Caswell said, their research found that headgear didn't significantly change how girls were playing the game.

"Some people have expressed concern that wearing headgear would change how girls played the game, resulting in them playing more aggressively, but we didn't find that to be the case," Caswell said.

The primary goal of the study was to examine concussion rates in girls' high school players wearing headgear specifically designed for women's

lacrosse against those of girls without headgear. Players were monitored across three seasons and included teams from Florida, which mandates the use of approved headgear of all high school girls players.

Caswell and his fellow researchers found that overall players without headgear had 59% more concussions than players wearing headgear. Caswell also said that the research team reviewed game video to compare the rate of impacts to the head among players with and without headgear. Findings indicated that for both players with and without headgear about 65% of illegal head impacts did not result in a penalty.

"There is an important conversation to be had about the shared roles lacrosse [headgear](#) and rules enforcement have in ensuring the game is played safely," Caswell said.

Kara Mupo, head women's lacrosse coach at Mason, said the study serves as an "important reminder to youth-level coaches, as well as middle school, club and high school coaches, to do their due diligence to help avoid serious contact-related injuries."

Headgear is not required by the NCAA for college women's lacrosse, but if it is worn must meet ASTM standards.

"This study is a great opportunity for youth-level coaches to reassess the ways in which they are teaching the sport as the game continues to progress," Mupo said.

Provided by George Mason University

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