



Official Statement: Calling Crown of the Helmet Violations

The NFL, NCAA and NFHS football rules committees have done a commendable job studying injury patterns and crafting rules related to top-of-the-head contact. These rules are critical to help prevent damage to the head, neck and spine, including concussion and catastrophic cervical spine injuries, for both student and professional athletes. Enforcement of these rules regrettably is uneven and infrequent.

Players should understand a helmet protects the head from blunt trauma injury. It does not prevent concussion or protect the spine and should not be relied on for that purpose. The best way to keep players safe is for coaches to teach the rules, players to follow the rules, and officials to enforce the rules. For the safety of tacklers, blockers, and ball carriers, it is imperative that the rule is uniformly applied at all levels of play, and that the use of the top of the head is always called as a penalty.

Game officials, coaches, administrators, and others are urged to do their part in ensuring penalties are assessed when violations of these rules occur.

The importance of proper contact technique is addressed in the National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement on Head-Down Contact and Spearing in Tackle Football, published in the March 2004 issue of the peer-reviewed *Journal of Athletic Training*, and available online at <http://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/HeadDownContactAndSpearingInTackleFB.pdf>. Another good resource is NATA's video "Heads Up," available at <http://www.nata.org/Heads-Up>.

These rules are also addressed in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's video, "2012 College Football Player Safety," available at http://s3.amazonaws.com/ncaa/web_video/football/2012_player_safety.html.

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