

## Summary of the MFL's Concussion Policy

**Introduction:** It has long been known that concussions are a potential hazard in the sport of football but recent research has shown them to be far more serious than common knowledge and, in fact, even trained medical knowledge, had previously thought. Exposure to this knowledge in the national and local media is doing much to bring this knowledge, to the general public.

Given this, it has been agreed that the MFL adopt a strong, pro-active, program designed to properly recognize and treat concussions suffered by our players, as well as educate our parents, players and coaches on all aspects of this problem.

**Concussion Policy:** In recognition of the serious potential consequences of concussions the MFL requires that the following items be followed by all teams active in the MFL.

### **Equipment:**

Acceptable helmets: Helmets are the player's first protection and as such must be of appropriate design and construction for the purpose of protection from concussion and must be fitted according to the requirements of the manufacturer. Their upkeep must also be in accordance with the requirements of the manufacturer. In regard to helmet type the MFL will replace, as needed, helmets with only those recognized by the new standards for football helmets as per their ability to protect against concussion developed by Virginia Tech, USA with helmets rated 4 or 5 star.

### **Training:**

#### **Coaching: Tackling techniques and acceptable drills**

It is important that players be taught and drilled with appropriate tackling techniques. To protect our players and their opponents' players must be trained to avoid head to head and head to body contact, avoid hitting with the helmet and most importantly to keep the head up. Players are taught to keep low when tackling but this sometimes results in dipping the whole upper body putting the head in danger of contact by the opponent's knees or even the ground. Form tackling that emphasizes bending the knees rather than the waist to get low as well as a straight back with head up should be used regularly to make correct technique second nature. Diving to make a tackle should be strongly discouraged. Effort must always be put into proper form rather than crushing hits as a result more time should be put into progressive form and much less into all out tackling drills.

#### **Education of Coaches as to recognition of the seriousness of concussions as well as how to recognize and appropriately deal with them**

The MFL will take steps to make sure that all coaches understand the seriousness of concussions and how to recognize them. The onus for this is placed first and foremost on the MFL, secondly but no less importantly on the areas that make up the MFL and finally on the teams Head Coach. The Head Coach will be ultimately responsible for the handling of all cases of suspected

concussion from communication with parents, to post concussion treatment and the return to play process.

**Education of parents as to recognition of the seriousness of concussions as well as how to recognize and appropriately deal with them**

The MFL and its areas will communicate through parent meetings, handouts and dedicated areas on all websites the seriousness of concussions, the details of how to recognize possible concussions and appropriate treatment including the return to play process. As part of this process emphasis will be made of the parent's role in preventing and treating concussions. It will be noted that parents must advise the Head Coach of any injury, particularly to the head that may have occurred outside of football.

**Education of Players as to recognition of the seriousness of concussions as well as how to recognize and appropriately deal with them**

All players will be taught to be aware of the importance of possible concussions and their appropriate treatment. Constant reinforcement of their responsibility to monitor their health, and communicate possible concerns to both coaches and parents will take place.

**Return to Play Process:**

The MFL recognizes that players become more susceptible to concussions after suffering one, and that a second concussion suffered shortly after the first is likely to result in far more serious after affects. As a result the MFL requires that the following process be followed in all cases:

1. Players suffering from a suspected concussion must seek appropriate medical treatment from a doctor conversant with concussions and their treatment. In this regard sports medicine specialists are recommended.
2. Players must be symptom free, based on information given the head coach by the parents of the concussed player, for five days before returning to practice.
3. The first practice back will be light involving non-contact drills beginning with easy sprints and agility work supervised by the head coach or a coach designated by the Head Coach and attended by at least one of the players parents or guardian/s. The supervisor will maintain direct communication with the player so as to be on guard for a return of symptoms. On any sign of a reoccurrence of symptoms players will stop all activity and return to rest until symptom free for a further five days.
4. When the player can handle light practice symptom free, practice may be intensified gradually up to full out with regular monitoring for any sign that symptoms have returned.
5. Should a player suffer a second, medically determined, concussion in a season that player will be ineligible to practice or play for the remainder of the season