

## COACH'S CONCUSSION SAFETY PLEDGE:

CREATING A CULTURE OF SAFETY



**SMARTTEAMS**  
SMART TEAMS · PLAY SAFE

*Please read each statement carefully and place your initials in the spaces provided. By initialing each statement and signing at the end you are signifying your commitment to creating a culture of concussion safety for your team. You are encouraged to keep a copy of this pledge handy and refer to it regularly throughout the season.*

I understand that a concussion is an injury to an athlete's brain, which I must always take seriously.

I have completed an online concussion training course for coaches, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Heads Up" course, and have attached the certificate to this form.

I know the signs and symptoms of concussion.

I have actively participated in a meeting with athletes, medical professionals (MDs, RNs, etc.) and allied health care professionals (ATCs, PTs etc.) at which the importance of immediate reporting by athletes of concussion symptoms in achieving individual and team performance and safety goals was strongly emphasized.

I will help minimize the risk of concussion by:

- teaching athletes "heads up" tackling and how to brace for and absorb body contact
- making sure that athletes' helmets fit properly, and that proper helmet fit is maintained over the course of the season
- implementing a strength and conditioning program for athletes which includes exercises designed to strengthen their neck muscles
- ensuring that athletes play with good sportsmanship at all times, and obey safety rules.

I will minimize the number of head impacts athletes sustain in practice by strictly limiting the number and duration of full-contact practices in accordance with relevant laws, rules, regulations, and best practices.

I will make sure that an athlete exhibiting any possible signs of concussion or reporting possible concussion symptoms is immediately removed from play for a sideline evaluation.

If a health care professional trained in the initial assessment for concussion is present, I will ask them to conduct a concussion assessment any time a concussion is suspected, and will not allow the athlete to return to play unless such assessment has been performed and the athlete has been cleared for continued participation by the health care professional.

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In the event a health care professional trained in the initial assessment of concussion is not present, I will not allow an athlete to return to a game or practice if they report symptoms of concussion or exhibit concussion signs.

If concussion is suspected, I will make sure the athlete undergoes a formal concussion evaluation by a trained health care professional away from the sports sideline.

In the event an athlete has been removed from play because of possible concussion, I will notify the athlete's parents immediately after the game or practice and, before the athlete is allowed to return home, give them information about concussion signs and symptoms, as well as a list of symptoms suggesting a more serious injury requiring immediate hospitalization, will encourage that the athlete be fully evaluated by a health care professional trained in the diagnosis of concussion, and will follow-up with them about the athlete's status.

Among the reasons athletes give for failing to report concussion symptoms are :

1. They do not want to disappoint coaches, teammates, parents, and fans by coming out of the game;
2. They feel pressure from coaches, teammates, parents, and/or fans to continue playing after a hard hit to the head;
3. They believe that coaches, teammates, parents, and fans expect them to play injured;
4. They fear a loss of playing time, jeopardizing their position as a starter, or having their toughness questioned; and
5. They do not think that the coaching staff and their teammates share their positive attitude towards concussion symptom reporting.

I recognize that athletes who continue to play with concussion symptoms are at increased risk of more serious brain injuries or to other parts of their bodies.

I understand that, after suffering a concussion, athletes may not be able to play at their best and could hurt the team's performance.

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I understand that concussed athletes who do not immediately report concussion symptoms and continue to play take an average of five (5) more days before being cleared for return to contact than concussed athletes who immediately report symptoms and are immediately removed from play.

I understand that athletes who continue to play after suffering a concussion are twice as likely to experience a prolonged recovery (8 or more days missed) before being cleared for return to contact than athletes who are immediately removed from play after a concussion.

I am committed to working with medical staff, athletes, parents, and fans to create an environment in which athletes feel comfortable in reporting concussion symptoms they or their teammates are experiencing, and believe that immediate concussion symptom reporting is not only in the best interests of the athlete but of the team.

I will make sure athletes understand that they have a responsibility to immediately report experiencing concussion symptoms to me or the medical staff.

I will make sure athletes understand that they have a responsibility to encourage teammates who they suspect of having sustained a concussion to request a concussion assessment, or, if they fail to do so, to request such an assessment on their behalf.

I will not pressure athletes to continue playing if they are experiencing concussion symptoms.

I will not criticize athletes for reporting concussion symptoms (either their own or of teammates) or encouraging teammates to report.

I will make clear to athletes that reporting concussion symptoms will not jeopardize their position as a starter or playing time when they return from injury.

I will make clear to athletes that their health and safety is my number one priority, even if it means losing a game.

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I will make sure athletes understand that they will be letting me, their teammates, their parents, or fans down if they fail to immediately report concussion symptoms.

I will make sure players know that deliberate hits to another player's head will subject them to disciplinary action beyond any penalty which may be assessed by game officials.

I will not allow an athlete to return to play after a diagnosed concussion until they have been given written authorization to do so under applicable law, and will only allow athletes to return to play after a concussion when they are both physically and psychologically ready.

I understand that parents, athletes, and athletic trainers are also committed to a culture of concussion safety, and are signing pledges similar to this one.



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Signature

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Name (Print)

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Date