


Workshop educates youth football coaches on concussion dangers

Like

Be the first of your friends to like this.

 Post this article for your Facebook friends

By JOHN O'KANE, For The Press | Posted:
Wednesday, July 28, 2010 |

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP - The National Football League confirmed on Tuesday that a poster warning players about the effects of concussions will hang in every locker room in the league.

Certified athletic trainer Kathe Bagnato of AtlantiCare points out that you don't have to be an NFL football player to worry about concussions.

Traumatic head injuries and concussions have become a hot-button issue at every level of football from pee wee all the way up to the pros.

With that in mind, Bagnato and AtlantiCare Health Services organized the first "Get Ahead in the Game - Prevent Concussions" workshop.

More than 100 volunteer coaches from the Cape May County Junior Football League were invited to attend the event at AtlantiCare LifeCenter in Egg Harbor Township, with half going on Monday and the other half Tuesday.

"The purpose of the event is to provide youth sports coaches, particularly football coaches, information on the signs and symptoms of a concussion or traumatic brain injury," Bagnato said.

Coaches representing some of the 13 teams in the Cape May County Junior Football League listened as Bagnato and fellow certified athletic trainer Meghan Mattson went over things such as the warning signs of concussions as well as proper helmet fitting that can go a long way in preventing head injuries.

Bagnato has put on a similar event for lacrosse and hockey coaches in the past and saw the need to do the same for football coaches.

"We wanted to really take a proactive approach with the youth of New Jersey," Bagnato said.

"We've actually embraced it with getting that information out to the parents and coaches so that they're able to better take care of their children and athletes. The more we can do it on the preventative side the better off our children are for the future."

Bagnato said coaches were very receptive to the idea of the workshop and that feedback has been great in previous workshops.

Tom Germana of Egg Harbor Township is the league director for the 11-12 year-old junior high division of the league and has been involved with coaching youth football for around 20 years.

"I think it's invaluable," said Germana, who ran the idea of attending the workshop past other coaches in the league. "By all of us going there, if this season goes through and we catch one of them, if we stop one kid from having serious lifelong problems than it was worth every minute."

"The big thing is understanding. Years ago, people would say '(the player) had their bell rung, let them sit down for two or three minutes and let them back in' and it's not like that anymore."

Galloway Township Renegades president Chuck Endicott was in attendance on Tuesday and said that the role of a coach has changed.

"These days, coaching football is not just going out there, blowing a whistle and putting a couple plays in," said Endicott, who has been involved with youth football for 37 years. "It's also making sure that all the children are safe with the concussions and hydration and things."

"The spotlight has been on this for the last couple of years with the high profile of the pros and all that. There have been concussions since time began but with the high profile at the pro level and the college level, it's trickling down. We see it also at our levels."

According to information provided by AtlantiCare, there were 223 people under the age of 18 treated (not just sports related) for concussions at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center and Urgent Care locations.

Germana and the other coaches were told how after a concussion, research shows that ensuing concussions can cause serious and sometimes permanent brain damage.

"We all need to know what signs to look for and that kind of stuff," Germana said. "We need to understand because concussions are something that not many people understand."

Coaches that attended the workshop were given a certificate that will be kept on file at AtlantiCare showing that they received training on concussions and preventative measures.

Contact John O'Kane:

609-272-7210

JOKane@pressofac.com

Concussion warning signs

Concussions can be tricky to diagnose. Signs may not appear for days or weeks after the injury. Here are some symptoms, according to WebMD.com

n confusion or feeling dazed

n clumsiness

n slurred speech

n nausea or vomiting

n headache

n balance problems or dizziness

n blurred vision

* sensitivity to light

* sensitivity to noise

* sluggishness

* ringing in ears

* behavior or personality changes

* concentration difficulties

* memory loss

© 1970-2010 Press of Atlantic City Media Group