

## **A Harsh Reality**

-Dan Rosenberg

An injury is no laughing matter. For many athletes, an injury can mean the end of a career, or even a life. Just last year, Eric LeGrand, a player for Rutgers' football team, was paralyzed due to an injury on the field. The players of every sport are often regarded as machines; gladiators who are battling on the field. That's a wrong idea, and it needs to stop. Athletes are humans, with emotions, people who make mistakes just like the fans who watch them. So when an athlete is injured, and the fans begin to cheer for his injury, a line is crossed.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Matt Cassel, an NFL quarterback who plays for the Kansas City Chiefs, was knocked out of a game with a head injury. The fans in the stadium, the fans of the Kansas City Chiefs themselves, cheered as he was knocked out of the game. This is a travesty, and it should never happen again. It does not matter what your opinion on the player is. It does not matter whether he is playing well or poorly. Cassel suffered an injury that has been proven to cause permanent damage to the brain, but the NFL fans put their own interest ahead of his safety. Oblivious to the danger of what had happened; the fans cheered and mocked their own quarterback. It is time to realize that it's just a game. Nothing more than that. But a man's livelihood, a man's life was altered on the field that day, and no one seemed to care. For whatever reason, the players of many sports have been dehumanized, seen as tools for an end instead of people.

Perhaps this new trend is caused by the phenomenon that is fantasy football. Fans begin to see players as nothing more than points and statistics instead of people. Maybe it is because of video games, in which players seem to be nothing more than graphics on a screen. Whatever the reason, it needs to stop. The NFL needs to wake up to the reality that players are not only being injured, but are dying because of their contributions on the field.

Former Patriots player Junior Seau most recently committed suicide due to post-concussion syndrome, a disease caused by receiving an inordinate amount of concussions. Post-concussion syndrome causes the build up of an unnecessary protein called Tau in the brain. There are many other players who have been affected as well. Former players have filed over 3000 lawsuits against the NFL claiming that they were not made aware of the dire risks to their mental and physical health caused by the sport of football. If Americans cannot see that these people on the field are risking their bodies and minds every single play, then maybe we can't handle watching football. Chiefs' lineman Eric Winston put it best.

“We are athletes. We are not gladiators. This is not the Roman Coliseum... there are long lasting ramifications to the game we play.”