

Concussion guidelines sought

- National standard eyed for young athletes
- LI reps have hearing on treatment, prevention

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In a small conference room at Suffolk Community College's Ammerman Campus, two local U.S. representatives tried to tackle a very big issue: youth athletes and concussions.

Long Island congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (D-Mineola) and congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) held a field hearing for the committee on education and labor, hearing from a doctor, a high school trainer, a former high school athlete and two former NFL players as to whether a federal standard can be set in the treatment and prevention of concussions in high school and youth-sport athletes.

Craig LoNigro, the athletic trainer and a health education teacher at Comsewogue High School, cited a 2009 report that estimated 400,000 high school athletes suffered brain injuries in the 2008-09 school year. Many returned to play too soon and their academic work suffered, along with their ability to play sports.

"I found it hard to concentrate in class," said Caitlin Monaghan, a basketball and soccer player at Garden City High School who suffered two concussions within a month of her senior year, in 2006. "My work suffered."

The committee held a hearing in Washington in May to begin the discussion on some sort of national "return to play" guidelines for concus-

sions in youth sports; since then, six states have adopted standards, and New York has a bill pending in the state Assembly to adopt similar guidelines: that all high school athletes who suffer a suspected concussion not return to play that day, that they are examined by a trainer or doctor and that they are eased back into participation, much like the guidelines for pro athletes now in effect.

"Given some of the financial constraints of schools, having care and testing available for everyone is a tough thing," Bishop said. "National guidelines are a good idea, a good start. Enforcing them is much, much harder."

Bishop said he was encouraged to hear from Dr. Hayley Queller, an orthopedic surgeon based in East Setauket who started conducting baseline neurological exams for four high schools in Suffolk County this year, that the tests — neurocognitive exams that are conducted before a sport's season begins, which can be referred to when an athlete suffers a brain injury to determine the extent — cost only \$2 per athlete.

"Hearing that is good news," Bishop said. "Cost is obviously a huge factor."

As is the "warrior mentality" of playing through pain, outlined by former Jets receiver Rich Caster and former Chargers offensive lineman Courtney Hall, who testified to their experiences with concussions in the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

"The questions were usually, 'How many fingers am I holding up?' or 'What day is it?'" Hall said. "We always played on Sundays. You weren't expected to miss time with a concussion, and you didn't want to."



Kevin Boss on Sunday suffered his second concussion in less than a year, the Giants said.

NFL REPORT

Adviser: Week 1 concussions no trend

The co-chairman of the NFL's Brain, Head and Neck Medical Committee said he doesn't see five concussions suffered by players on the first Sunday of the regular season as a trend.

But Dr. Hunt Batjer said the league and its medical staff will monitor concussions closely. He added, "If this pace continues, it's either a better reporting of the symptoms, or it is something else systemic."

Batjer said the injuries were treated properly in Philadelphia and at New Meadowlands Stadium, according to the guidelines set by commissioner Roger Goodell and the NFL Players Association. There were three concussions in the Panthers-Giants game

and two in Packers-Eagles.

Eagles linebacker Stewart Bradley and quarterback Kevin Kolb were diagnosed with concussions after each briefly returned to play. Giants tight end Kevin Boss and two Panthers, quarterback Matt Moore and receiver Charly Martin, also suffered concussions.

Goodell sent a memo to the 32 teams last year saying a player who suffers a concussion should not return to action on the same day if he shows certain symptoms. Anyone watching Bradley stagger to his feet and crash to the ground probably would have considered him disoriented.

"We didn't just stick [Bradley and Kolb] out there without having followed the protocol," Eagles

coach Andy Reid said yesterday. "When [Bradley] came off that initial time, he was fine."

Kolb and Bradley will be evaluated tomorrow and will see an independent specialist, as required by the NFL, on Friday.

■ Injury report

Lions coach Jim Schwartz said quarterback Matthew Stafford's injured right shoulder won't need surgery, and that there's no timetable on his return . . . The Eagles lost fullback Leonard Weaver (knee) and center Jamaal Jackson (triceps) for the season . . . Packers defensive lineman Justin Harrell (knee) is out for the season, and running back Ryan Grant (ankle) will miss at least one game. — AP