

# YOUTH FOOTBALL FACT SHEET

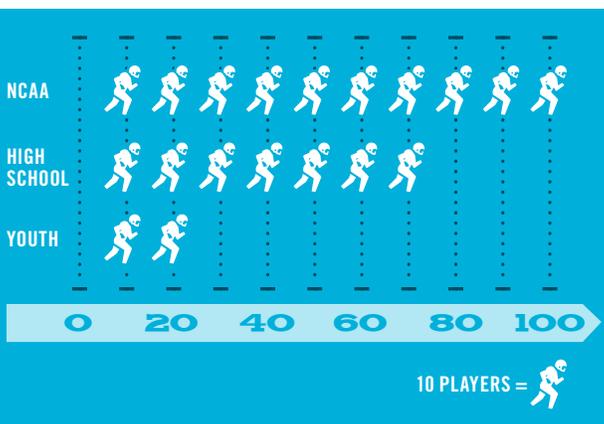
DATA INCLUDES YOUTH FOOTBALL  
PLAYERS FROM THE AGES OF 5 TO 14

## YOUTH FOOTBALL SAFETY STUDY OVERVIEW

Data for this fact sheet originates from the Youth Football Safety Study conducted by the Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention during the 2012 and 2013 youth football seasons. The main purpose of the study was to compare the safety of the Age-Only and Age-Weight playing standards. In addition, high school and college data were provided for the same years by the National Athletic Treatment, Injury and Outcomes Network (NATION) and the NCAA Injury Surveillance Program. All injuries were evaluated and reported by Athletic Trainers.

## COMPARISON OF PLAYING STANDARDS

After adjusting for age, plays per game, location, team, weight and other factors, there was no difference in the safety between the Age-Only and Age-Weight playing standards if there were restrictions on ball carrier weight. It is important to note that these findings do not apply to “unrestricted” youth football leagues in which players compete against each other regardless of size, age, or skill.



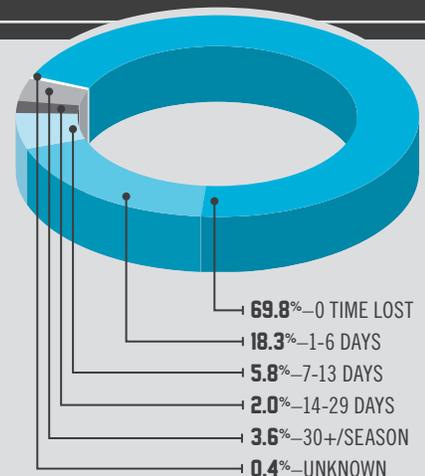
of youth players who play iron-man football. We understand this is in contrast of the desire of most parents who wish to see their son or daughter get as many plays as possible, but they should understand that playing both ways increases the volume of activity and needs for energy and fluid replacement. Playing iron-man football may have also contributed to the higher incidence of heat injury on game days seen in youth as compared to high school and collegiate players. Where there are too few youth players to create a sufficient number of 11-man teams, eight-man football is an alternative game format that could be beneficial.

Dompier TP, Kerr ZY, Marshall SW, Hainline B, Snook E, Hayden R, Simon J. Incidence of Concussion During Practice and Games in Youth, High School, and Collegiate American Football Players. *JAMA Pediatrics*. Published online May 4, 2015. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.0210

## 10 MOST COMMON INJURIES

- 34.4% Bruises
- 16.3% Ligament Sprain
- 9.6% Concussion
- 7.8% Muscle Strain
- 4.1% Wind Knocked Out
- 3.9% Fractures
- 3.5% Wound-care (Abrasions)
- 3.1% Muscle Spasm
- 2.8% Respiratory (Asthma)
- 1.9% Heat Injury

## SEVERITY OF INJURY



**TIME LOSS:** Injury that requires medical assessment and/or treatment and restricts the athlete's participation for at least 24 hours beyond the day of injury.



## INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

- Have a preseason physical examination and follow your doctor's recommendations.
- Wear properly fitted protective equipment, such as a helmet, pads and a mouth guard.
- Tackle with the head up and do not lead with the helmet.
- Regarding concussions, if in doubt, sit them out.
- Athletes with a concussion must be removed from practice or competition and should not return that day and not until given clearance by an approved medical provider according to the state's concussion legislation.
- Football players should have unrestricted access to water during practice or competition and replace every pound lost with 20 ounces of fluid before the next practice.
- Football players should be given adequate time to acclimatize and recover during preseason training.
- Speak with a sports medicine professional or athletic trainer if you have any concerns about football injuries or football injury prevention strategies.
- Nearly all heat injuries occurred on game days. Players should avoid arriving at the fields too early, but if unavoidable, they should stay hydrated, limit activity, and seek shaded areas.

## PRACTICE SAFETY

Changing game conditions is challenging without modifying the rules of the game. Practice activities and intensity are highly modifiable, however. In youth football, 53 percent of all injuries and 46 percent of all concussions occurred during practice. The most common mechanism of injury was contact with another player. Based on this, practice should focus on skill development, proper tackling, less player-to-player contact and fewer scrimmages. Simply modifying practice activities and intensity could have a positive impact on player safety during practice.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**4,092** – Number of youth players in the study

**1,475** – Number of reported injuries

**210** – Number of youth football teams in the study

**141** – Number of reported concussions

**4** – Number of players who sustained more than one concussion in a season (maximum of two)

**0** – Number of catastrophic head, neck, heat or cardiovascular injuries

**0** – Number of concussions sustained by 5-, 6-, and 7-year-olds despite more than 7,000 exposures

**2%** – Proportion of players who suffered a heat injury (heat injuries are 100 percent preventable)

**55%** – Proportion of teams whose players sustained zero concussions

**70%** – Proportion of injuries classified as minor and the player returned to activity the same day

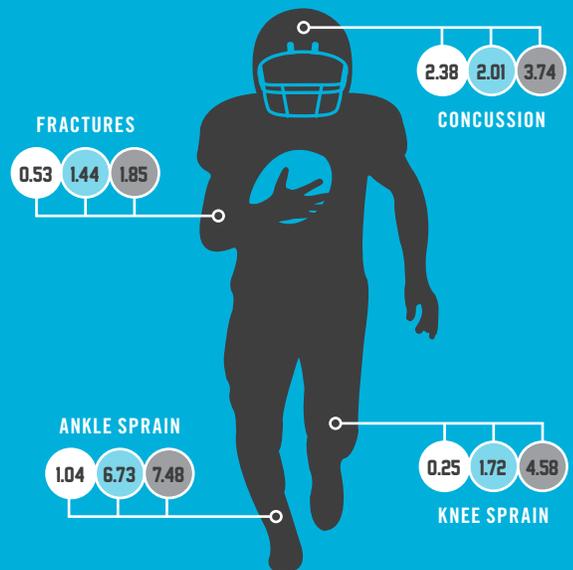
**12%** – Proportion of players that sustained an injury restricting participation

**4%** – Proportion of players who suffered a concussion

**2%** – Proportion of players who suffered a fracture

## GAME INJURY RATES PER 1,000 PARTICIPATING PLAYERS

● YOUTH ● HIGH SCHOOL ● COLLEGIATE



**HOW TO INTERPRET THE DATA:** If 1,000 youth players were all playing in a game at the same time, 1.04 would suffer an ankle sprain, less than one would suffer a knee sprain, fracture, or heat injury, and 2.38 would suffer concussions.

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The Datalys Center is an independent 501(c)3 whose mission is to assist sport governing bodies, policy makers, coaches, parents, and players to better understand and prevent injuries.

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