



Grapevine

FOOTBALL DEMENTIA...

Writing in the *New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell has examined the effects of cumulative exposure to contact in football – and, okay, this is American football – on players who exhibit symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease or dementia. As Gladwell points out, research in the United States by Ann McKee at the Veterans Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts, shows there’s a high incidence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a progressive neurological disorder resulting from brain trauma, typically as a result of concussion, in cases of retired football players. We needn’t worry: that’s just the result of the kind of dumb helmet-to-helmet damage endured only by linebackers in American football, right? Wrong. According to findings from a sports concussion research program by the University of North Carolina’s Kevin Guskiewicz, the mechanism for CTE is getting hit too many times in the head. Guskiewicz’s team has measured the force and location of every blow football players receive to the head, and found that it’s often not the big hits that lead to concussion. As Guskiewicz explained to Gladwell, ‘It’s not because (a) hit to the side of the head was especially dramatic; it was that it came after the (softer) blow in warmup, which, in turn, followed the concussion in August, which was itself the consequence of the 30 prior hits that day, and the hits the day before that, and the day before that, and on and on, perhaps back to his high-school playing days.’ Is it worth looking at contact-based football codes, and asking what’s happening to the heads of the students in your school’s teams?

...AND MORE FOOTBALL DEMENTIA

If 2009 is the year of alcohol-related bad press for football – think Brendan Fevola, Matthew Johns and group sex in Christchurch or North Melbourne’s chicken carcass video – 2010 could be the year of the cleanup, if the league codes can manage to get alcohol out of their junior clubrooms. Last year, the Australian Drug Foundation’s Community Alcohol Action Network called

for alcohol sponsorship of professional sport to be curbed or banned outright, but the Coalition of Major Professional Sports successfully resisted that call. Meanwhile, parents like Renee Duncan made headlines for allowing her son and other 14- and 15-year olds from Warrnambool’s South Rovers Football Club to drink alcohol at a party after their grand final. The problem, according to several sources, is that South Rovers is not an isolated case: underage drinking is endemic in junior club football. According to one under-18 coach in Victoria, clubs regularly provide post-match slabs of beer for underage players, a claim supported by support staff for another junior team, also in Victoria. Is it worth checking on the post-match practices of your school’s teams?

GETTING FOOTBALL’S HOUSE IN ORDER

If underage drinking in football is yet to be addressed, Victorian junior football clubs are otherwise getting their house in order. A case in point is Melbourne’s Cranbourne Junior Football Club (CJFC), which this year instituted a program to address poor behaviour in breach of the club’s code of conduct by coaches, support staff, players and spectators. As a report on that successful program, ‘Controlling behaviour: A case study from CJFC,’ puts it, ‘This case study and findings are real... (We) have begun the long road of changing our club’s culture and making junior football what it should be: a game for kids, to be enjoyed by the kids.’

WHO OWNS THOSE BLACKLINE MASTERS?

The Federal Court in September dismissed an appeal by the University of Western Australia (UWA) against a decision last year by Justice Robert French in favour of Dr Bruce Gray, a professor of surgery at UWA. In the appeal, UWA claimed that Dr Gray’s terms of employment meant that his ‘targeted microsphere technology’ invention for the treatment of cancer was the intellectual property of UWA as his employer. Considering Dr Gray’s employment and employ-

ment contract, as well as aspects of UWA’s administrative systems, the Federal Court found that, since Dr Gray had no ‘duty to invent,’ UWA had no interest in the inventions, despite the fact that Dr Gray was employed by it. UWA is seeking to appeal to the High Court of Australia – where Justice French, who originally found for Dr Gray, is now Chief Justice.

SLOW DOWN FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

Analysis by overseas student recruiter IDP Education indicates that the current 38 per cent growth rate in numbers of Indian students would lead to 500,000 students in five years’ time. ‘In big markets like India or China, single-digit growth is good for Australia,’ IDP chief executive Tony Pollock told the *Australian’s* Guy Healy. ‘Australia would find it difficult to supply quality education if the...education growth rates of the past few years continue.’

TOYS-R-US SANCTIONED FOR BOYS-R-US CATALOGUE

Last Christmas, Year 6 students from Gustavslund School in Växjö, Sweden, filed a complaint against Toys-R-Us with the Reklamombudsmannen or Advertising Ombudsman, Sweden’s advertising industry regulator, because its Christmas catalogue featured ‘outdated gender roles because ...the boys were portrayed as active and the girls as passive,’ according to a statement from the Reklamombudsmannen. As Växjö’s local paper, the *Smålandsposten*, reported, the complaint followed more than two years of study by the Year 6 students on gender roles. The Reklamombudsmannen sanctioned Toys-R-Us with a public reprimand, criticising the company because ‘the catalogue portrays children’s games and choice of toys in a narrow-minded way, and this exclusion of boys and girls from different types of toys is, in itself, degrading to both genders.’

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