

Number of knee injuries on the rise

In a new era of football, changes seem to be made every day. New extra point distances, new rules protecting receivers' and quarterbacks' heads, and new playing surfaces. However, one thing that can't be changed about the game is the violence. With an incredible rise of knee injuries at all levels of football, players and trainers are looking for the cause.

Through research I have found that there are three major causes for the incredible number of injuries over the past few seasons. The first of these is the new technology that has been developed to make the game faster, most notably the improved cleat and playing surface. All the cleat companies compete for the lightest, best looking cleat with the best cutting ability (longer cleats). When you combine these with the new field turfs that allow little to no movement on cuts, you set up players' knees for dangerous situations.

To top this off, the newer, lighter cleats provide much less stability than the older, heavier versions. Many of the more serious knee injuries, are a result of the ankle rolling over and the knee following.

The possible second cause is the new type of offenses that more teams are switching to: a spread-type offense that

spreads the players from sideline to sideline. These offenses run on high speed and quick cuts, requiring both the lineman and skilled backs on both sides to play fast. The main goal is to hit short dinky passes in the flats and across the middle, allowing for hard cuts and hard hits.

The third and final reason is actually the plethora of new rules which prohibit almost all head to head contact. Players can now even be ejected from a game if the referees think that a player purposely tried to target an opponent's head. Any

helmet-to-helmet contact with a quarterback is an automatic 'roughing the passer' foul. Although these new restrictions have slightly reduced the number of concussions,

they are forcing defensive players to aim lower. The amount of helmet-to-knee contact has increased significantly over the past few years. Even though most of the knee injuries come from the twisting or bending of the knee, contact has also put many players on the sideline.

I believe that knee injuries are just part of this violent sport. While knee braces can help to keep player's knees safe, there is no real solution that provide complete protection of any body part when playing the rough game of football.



MIKE'S MOMENTS

by MICHAEL COTTER