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NFL Responsible for Player Injury Treatment

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Written by [kylestack](#) on 12/23/2010 1:59 PM

I wrote earlier this week that the Indianapolis Colts should have been more careful with wide receiver Austin Collie after he suffered a concussion in their Week 15 game. After receiving a medical check-up, they let him return to the sideline, where he'd be exposed to the stadium's loud noises and bright lights. It wasn't a smart decision, and I wrote that the NFL should institute a policy that prevents concussed players from returning to the sideline during a game in which they were injured. The league should also track how closely each team follows its rules for player injury treatment.

Several people pointed out to me that while the NFL can enact a set of rules, it's the team's responsibility to abide by them. I feel it can be taken a step further. The league's reputation is on the line every time a team medically mistreats a player. In that respect, it's the NFL's duty to ensure proper care is taken.

In a December 8th media conference call regarding helmet safety, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell acknowledged the importance of teams following injury treatment procedure. "One of the things we've got to do is make sure there is awareness out there so that when players get an injury, they report the injury to our medical professionals so that they can be evaluated and those determinations can be made from a medical standpoint," Goodell said during the call.

That statement represents why it's so vital that the NFL makes sure teams are doing what they're supposed to, including following the league's return-to-play policy. As someone who read my post earlier this week noted, teams have an incentive to keep their players on the field. If a normally productive player is injured, a team might be tempted to handle the injury unethically by getting that player back into action. That isn't meant as an accusation toward any team in particular--it's simply a hypothetical situation.

Yet that paints a picture of what could happen if the NFL trusts teams to make the "right" decisions. Each team is a reflection of the league. And in that case, the NFL has an inherent responsibility to make sure teams are giving their players the kind of medical treatment they need to fully heal.

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