

## Law gives rest to athletes with concussions

FISHERS - A state law is better protecting young athletes from dangerous head injuries.

"Until it happens, I guess you don't think about it," said one parent.

It happened Friday during a soccer game at North Central High School, a hard hit that made parents think. The Brownsburg player did get up and was checked on the sidelines by a trainer. Later, two heads collided. The IU Methodist trainer put them through a special checklist looking for symptoms.

"There are 400,000 sports concussions every year in the United States," said Dr. Terry Horner, a neurologist with IU Methodist Sports Medicine.

Horner says doctors are seeing more of them.

"We have doubled the number I saw last year," he said.

Fishers High School quarterback Ben Pritchett is one of those athletes in the concussion statistics.

"A defensive lineman speared me on my head. I fell down pretty quickly and I hit my head on the ground," Pritchett said.

He got a headache and nausea. Following a new state law, trainers benched him.

"I was upset and disappointed," Pritchett said.

Two weeks after that hit, Pritchett has only been cleared for light workouts. Patients can only gradually get back in the game, for a reason.

"He had a hit here, multiple symptoms," Horner said of another patient.

That patient, like Pritchett, is still sidelined. Many athletes now take baseline tests, where doctors measure things like visual memory before a collision, so it can be compared to brain function after a hit.

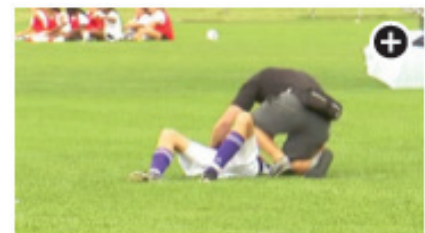
"This is his score, 77 compared to where it was at 95," Horner said.

That player's "visual memory" is down in the so-called impact test done after his injury. He got better, but after even one light practice, the numbers dropped again.

"His impact score shows he is down to 49," Horner said.

That is why the new law says athletes stay benched until an expert gives the all clear.

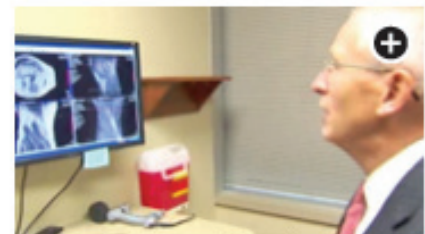
"You don't want to mess around with a brain injury. You need your brain the rest of your life," said Pritchett.



Thousands of student-athletes suffer concussions each year.



Fishers QB Ben Pritchett was sidelined with a concussion.



Dr. Terry Horner studies the effects of concussions in athletes.