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Over the past few seasons the NFL has made several changes to their rules to accommodate for the health and safety of the players. These professional athletes are looked at as super humans by some fans due to their strength, power, and speed. However, these players are not immortal and get injured too. Concussions are becoming a professional football player's worst nightmare because not only can multiple concussions cause an end to their career, it can cause brain damage affecting the way they live their everyday life. All the new rules over the last few seasons are all attempts to bring down the total number of concussions and injuries. The real question though is, are these rule changes actually working and keeping the players safe?

During the past offseason The NFL Competition Committee received input from multiple sources such as coaches, general managers, team owners, current players and NFL Legends, the NFL Players Association and many more before recommending changes to any of the leagues rules. For a rule to change, it must involve several questions such as does the change improve the game, how will it be officiated, how will it be coached, and so on.

One of the most drastic rule change for the 2018 season is the new Use of Helmet rule which states that "it is a foul if a player lowers his head to initiate and make contact with his helmet against an opponent." Both offensive and defensive players can be ejected for the use of helmet fouls. The standards for being ejected via this rule are if the player "lowers his helmet to establish a linear body posture prior to initiating and making contact with the helmet" and "the player delivering the blow had an unobstructed path to his opponent; and if the contact was clearly avoidable."

This Use of Helmet rule was created in attempt to decrease the percentage of concussions and head related injuries. More NFL players last season were diagnosed with concussions in any season since the league started sharing this data back in 2012. A jaw dropping total of 281 concussions were reported during the preseason and regular season as well as practices, while the previous high came from the 2015 season with 275 total concussions. Concussions during regular season games rose from 211 total in 2016 up to 225 concussions in 2017.

Not only was the Use of Helmet rule an attempt to increase player safety, as was the league changing the way players line up for kickoffs. Which Prohibits the kicking team from getting a running start at the returner and his blockers. This new rule made the number of injuries on kick returns during preseason games drop from three in 2017 to zero this past preseason.

Now heading into Week 11 of the season, according to the NFL weekly injury report there have been 42 concussions recorded this season. On average, most of these concussed

players were only out for one game and returned the following week. Some were more serious injuries like the Carolina Panthers Strong Safety Da'Norris Searcy who got a concussion in Week 2 and was placed on the Injury Reserve since then. Searcy was placed on the IR because it was his second concussion, his first initial concussion of 2018 was in his second preseason game against the Miami Dolphins.

On top of adjusting league rules, the NFL had donated more than \$35 million in grants to help fund medical research into brain health and injuries on November 15, 2018. It was part of their \$100 million initiative, announced back in 2016, called "Play Safe. Play Smart." The \$100 million will be split by giving \$60 million to technological research while the other \$40 million will be used towards the funding of medical research that focus on the effects of head injuries.

Overall the multiple NFL rule changes towards the health and safety of the players are in fact beneficial and helping slow down the rate of concussions and injuries.