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October 1, 2013  412-622-1366
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FRONTLINE INVESTIGATES THE NFL’S CONCUSSION CRISIS
FRONTLINE Presents
League of Denial: The NFL’s Concussion Crisis
Tuesday, October 8, 2013, 9-11 P.M. on PBS

AND

WQED PITTSBURGH REPORTS ON
CONCUSSION DIAGNOSES & LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS
WQED PITTSBURGH Presents
Concussions: A New Way of Thinking
Thursday, October 10, 2013, at 8 P.M. on WQED-TV

PITTSBURGH—WQED-TV will broadcast a new FRONTLINE program and local
documentary regarding the connections between football and concussions.

The National Football League, a multibillion-dollar commercial juggernaut, presides
over America’s indisputable national pastime. But the NFL is under assault:
thousands of former players and a host of scientists have claimed the league has tried
to cover up how football inflicted long-term brain injuries on many players.

What did the NFL know, and when did it know it? What’s the truth about the risks to
players? What can be done?

In a special two-hour investigation, League of Denial: The NFL’s Concussion Crisis,
FRONTLINE and prize-winning journalists Mark Fainaru-Wada and Steve Fainaru of
ESPN reveal the hidden story of the NFL and brain injuries drawn from their
(Crown Archetype, October 2013).
Premiering October 8 at 9 p.m. on WQED-TV, *League of Denial: The NFL’s Concussion Crisis* investigates how, for years, the league worked to refute scientific evidence that the violent collisions at the heart of the game are linked to an alarming incidence of early-onset dementia, brain damage and other devastating consequences, even death.

The investigation draws on more than 200 interviews with scientists, doctors and former players, including some of the NFL’s all-time greats, as well as previously unpublished medical records, NFL memorandums and e-mails.

“We all know football is violent and dangerous; that’s not a mystery,” says Steve Fainaru. “But if it’s shown, or if it’s suggested, that players can come away severely and prematurely brain-damaged as a result of their careers, that’s going to change the way people look at football completely.”

“In every single play, particularly at the line of scrimmage, guys are running into each other head to head, and that’s just the nature of the sport,” says Mark Fainaru-Wada. “And the science is emerging more and more that that’s the very nature of what this issue is about and why the players are going to develop this problem.”

In hour one of *League of Denial: The NFL’s Concussion Crisis*, Fainaru and Fainaru-Wada chronicle the discovery of a devastating neurological disease in the brain of the Pittsburgh Steelers legend Mike Webster, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), which was likely incurred during Webster’s 17-year NFL career.

As FRONTLINE reports, the response from the NFL to Webster’s diagnosis was swift. The league demanded a retraction of the scientific paper explaining the diagnosis, insisted there was no evidence linking football to chronic brain disease, and used its own heavily funded research arm to try to kill the findings and discredit the researchers behind them.

“For the most part, people didn’t want to believe it’s true,” a former team physician for the Steelers tells FRONTLINE. “They didn’t want to admit to themselves or anybody else that our beloved sport, probably our most popular sport, could end up with brain damage.”

The discovery of CTE in Mike Webster was only the beginning. In hour two, *League of Denial: The NFL’s Concussion Crisis* investigates how the NFL responded to the growing body of scientific evidence that football was putting the brains of its players at risk.

But professional, adult athletes aren’t the only ones at risk. As FRONTLINE reports, scientists are finding evidence of CTE in high school athletes, too.

“One of the biggest problems we had is that as long as the NFL dismissed this and said it’s not a big deal, … that meant parents were signing up their kids to go play
football believing that there was no risk of problem,” one researcher tells FRONLINE. “And you know that wasn’t fair to those kids or those parents, but especially those kids.”

Premiering October 10 at 8 p.m. on WQED-TV, Concussions: A New Way of Thinking reports on the increase in concussion diagnoses and how local sports programs and the Pittsburgh medical community are working to keep football players and other young athletes, from rugby players to cheerleaders, safe and healthy.

The 30-minute documentary, produced by Emmy-winning reporter Beth Dolinar, includes interviews with a Trinity High School football player recovering from a serious concussion, concerned parents and coaches, while exploring current treatments that sometimes differ in theory. Balancing the young person's future health and their desire to get back in the game is also a great challenge.

Credits

League of Denial: The NFL’s Concussion Crisis is a FRONLINE production with the Kirk Documentary Group. The producers are Michael Kirk, Jim Gilmore and Mike Wiser. The director is Michael Kirk. The writers are Michael Kirk, Mike Wiser, Steve Fainaru and Mark Fainaru-Wada. The reporters are Jim Gilmore, Steve Fainaru and Mark Fainaru-Wada. The deputy executive producer of FRONLINE is Raney Aronson-Rath. The executive producer of FRONLINE is David Fanning.

About FRONLINE
FRONLINE is U.S. television’s longest running investigative documentary series and explores the issues of our times through powerful storytelling. The series has won every major journalism and broadcasting award, including 57 Emmy Awards and 14 Peabody Awards. More than 150 FRONLINE films can be watched online at pbs.org/frontline.

FRONLINE is produced by WGBH Boston and is broadcast nationwide on PBS. Funding for FRONLINE is provided through the support of PBS viewers and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Major funding for FRONLINE is provided by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the Park Foundation, the Wyncote Foundation and the FRONLINE Journalism Fund. FRONLINE is closed-captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers by the Media Access Group at WGBH. FRONLINE is a registered trademark of the WGBH Educational Foundation.

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