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## GIANTS

## Glauber: Disciplining cheap-shotters a hit with McCaffrey



Updated: Oct 23, 2010 02:07 AM  
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As a long-time wide receiver who was forced into retirement because of repeated concussions, former Giant and Bronco Ed McCaffrey is understandably concerned about the recent spate of hits that has led the NFL to redouble its efforts to promote safer tackling techniques.

McCaffrey is especially sensitive to the issue because all four of his sons play football. He wants them to play the game the way it's meant to be played. That means defenders staying within the rules and not using their helmets to make tackles. And it means looking up to the NFL as an appropriate example.

Which is why McCaffrey is completely on board with the league's decision to penalize players with heavy fines and threaten suspensions if the illegal hits continue.

"Science has proved the damaging effects of concussions, so the league needs to do whatever it can to protect players and to protect the integrity of the game," McCaffrey - who runs a football camp for young players each year - said from his home in Denver, where he hosts a weekly television and radio show. "Overall, I do believe suspensions should be a potential penalty for flagrant and multiple violations of the NFL rulebook."

McCaffrey's take on the illegal hits is in keeping with many offensive players, who are generally supportive of NFL commissioner Roger Goodell's highly publicized

push to eliminate helmet-to-helmet hits. The NFL fined Steelers linebacker James Harrison , Patriots safety Brandon Meriweather and Falcons cornerback Dunta Robinson a combined \$175,000 for their illegal hits last week.

"I played back in the day when there wasn't even a rule with helmet-to-helmet hits," said McCaffrey, who suffered so many concussions during his career that "I don't remember how many."

He had two concussions in his final three games before retiring after the 2003 season. "I've had minor and major concussions," McCaffrey said, "so trust me, there's nobody who plays this game who wants to suffer the long-term effects of head trauma."

McCaffrey feels fortunate that he's mostly symptom-free from the repeated concussions he suffered during his 13-year career. He hopes others don't have to deal with the problem moving forward.

And that includes defensive players, many of whom suffer from concussion problems because they use their helmets to make tackles. McCaffrey pointed to the example of former NFL safety Chuck Cecil , who was notorious for launching himself into defenders head-first. Cecil eventually had to retire because of concussion problems.

"One of the first things you learn as a kid is not to lead with your head, because you can hurt your own neck," McCaffrey said. "It's bad technique. I have a good friend who is one of the class acts that's ever played the game, [former safety] John Lynch , and he was fined by the NFL for hits to the head. John is a great family man and a poster child for what players should be, but if he uses bad technique, he should be fined."

But it could take some time for defensive players to get on board with the safety-first mind-set.

"If you teach how the NFL is telling us to play to kids in Pop Warner, high school and college, they'll never get drafted," Giants safety Deon Grant said. "They'd be labeled as soft. They'd be questioned coming out of college. They might not even get scholarships."

Goodell remains determined to make the game safer, saying that "we have to do the best possible job of protecting the players, even if we have to protect them from themselves."

McCaffrey couldn't agree more.

"It's all about player safety," he said. "If the NFL could fine me \$7,500 for having my socks too low, then they can fine or suspend a guy for hitting helmet-to-helmet."

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