

ABSTRACT

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Title: THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES IN AMERICAN FOOTBALL

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Over the course of the last millennium, the game of football has become synonymous with American culture. Fans across the country pack stadiums every Sunday in a cult-like fashion. However, there is a darker side to the sport that has been hidden for years. In the early days of the sport, players suffered devastating injuries that often led to paralyzation and sometimes death. In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt intervened to improve the safety of the game.

While the risk of injury was mitigated, the pain and suffering did not end there. All throughout the 20th Century, football players suffered from undiagnosed mental illnesses. For years, the National Football League (NFL) made sure that the public was unaware of this. When Dr. Bennet Omalu identified the neurodegenerative brain disease called chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) in the corpse of Mike Webster in 2002, the world finally gained a glimpse into what the NFL had been hiding. This thesis covers the factors that contribute to the development of CTE in the brains of football players and also provides strategies to help make the game safer moving forward.