

Appointment #3...Concussions

Earlier this autumn, my good friend, Matt Fraidin and I were talking and he mentioned to me that he had struck his head against the main wall a few weeks prior. He described that he felt fatigued since and had some temporary difficulty in concentrating. I stopped and responded to him "my friend, I believe that you have suffered a concussion".....

To many of us who follow the sporting world, concussions have been on the forefront for the past year. The NFL has recently settled a case against its former players in regards to concussion and head injury with many players suffering long-lasting symptoms well after they're playing days have concluded. Several other contact sports are dealing with similar issues.

Court tennis is not immune from this phenomenon. The unique combination of solid balls, heavy racquets and solid wall boundaries create an environment that is ripe for the potential of a concussion to occur. This is not only true for the player but also for the marker and spectators as well.

In addition to Matt, I have had discussions with Barney Tanfield in regards to marker safety. Steve Virgona was struck by ball while marking this past year and suffered a mild concussion. I also personally attended to a spectator at a professional tournament that was struck by a ball that ricocheted off the racket of a player defending a force. He was sitting 30 feet above the court in the spectator area. He was knocked temporarily unconscious.

Concussions are brain trauma in which a brain suffers a bruise, usually via contact. The brain sits inside the skull and is surrounded by cerebral spinal fluid. Trauma that causes the brain to bang against the skull is the basic mechanism of how a concussion occurs.

Symptoms include: headaches, confusion, amnesia, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, slurred speech, delayed response to questions, fatigue, difficulty in concentration. The symptoms may be transient or may last for several days or weeks.

The key to treating concussions is to first identify that someone has suffered from one. Rest is the mainstay of treatment. This is very important because repeated trauma shortly after a concussion occurs can magnify the severity and intensity of the symptoms and this creates the potential for long standing disability. Medical consultation should be sought if there is any doubt that a player has suffered a concussion. When in doubt, always err to the side of caution. Just because you can't see the bruise on the surface of the brain, it doesn't mean that it is not there....

-Dr. Anders Cohen