

The Testimony of Merrill Hoge before the House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary hearing entitled “Legal Issues Relating to Football Head Injuries.”

Chairman Conyers, Ranking Member Smith, and the Committee, I am Merrill Hoge and I played professional football for the Pittsburgh Steelers and Chicago Bears. I competed in the National Football League from 1987 through 1994 and traumatic brain injuries prematurely ended my professional football career. The following key points related to head trauma and the need for the standardized treatment of brain injuries will be addressed in my testimony before the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to your questions.

- First I will discuss what happened to me in my personal experience with head trauma and how it affected my career and life.
- I will also address what I believe went wrong in the care process with those concussions and how that could have been improved and potentially saved my career.
- I will provide reference to how delicate and vital the brain is and why we should protect it.
- I will ask for help creating a national standard for dealing with head trauma in sports.
- In addition to being a former professional athlete, I speak from the perspective of a Youth Sport Coach concerned about a standard that could protect athletes in each sport that I have coached including football.
- I ask the members reviewing this issue to help make sport in America safer with requirements on education about caring for all sport-related injuries including concussions.
- I believe we must not overact by trying to take away athletics from those that want to play. We must work to promote activity to combat the problems with obesity in children that we are currently dealing with in American children.
- My meetings with Roger Goodell and DeMaurice Smith have gone well. Both seem interested in this issue.
- Finally, I believe there is a need for the NFL and NFLPA to come together to work together on addressing this issue.