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# NOAH'S LAST CHANCE

How new technology saved Noah Parsons' football career, and how he didn't let adversity stop him from playing the sport he loves

By: Parker Hemming

**B**efore the 2023 Pella Football Season, Senior Noah Parsons was faced with a challenge. Parsons has had several concussions throughout his playing career, and he is one concussion away from not being able to play football ever again.

He was torn about playing this year, so he decided to look for other options that would allow him to play safely. One of these options was to purchase the new Riddell Axiom Helmet. The Riddell Axiom is one of the most expensive helmets on the market that is specifically designed for players with a high risk of concussions.

The most interesting part about this helmet is that it is custom-made to the player who is wearing it. Parsons had to wear a special head covering, and then his head shape was scanned and uploaded to Riddell's system.

While it is protective, the look of the helmet is very different from any other.

"I like the sleek look of the helmet; it fits around my head perfectly," said Parsons. "[It] doesn't move around a lot." Concussions are a very prominent injury in contact sports, especially in sports

like football. Todd Smith, the Head Athletic Trainer for Pella High, said the reason for this is that football is a collision sport rather than a contact sport.

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that affects the function

**"Being a smarter and safer player is a great way to try and prevent concussions."**

**-Noah Parsons**

of the neurons in your brain.

One of the most common ways someone can get a concussion in football is when they lead with their head, but they can also occur when a player hits their head on the ground or if their head and neck are whipped back at a high speed. Concussions are also big problems in other sports, like wrestling.

"I think concussions are a big problem in other sports as well. Football you see them a lot more often. But my last concussion I got in wrestling," said Parsons.

"And I mean, that's probably my worst concussion yet even though I didn't have a big collision."

Teams all over the world are trying to reduce the risk of concussions in football. Coaches are trying to teach new, safer tackling techniques that help with this; however, sometimes players can lose control during high speed encounters on the field.

"In practice, we work on better tackling with your head out of the way. But they're just cases and scenarios where sometimes you can't always get your head out of the way or sometimes it just doesn't work that way," said Parsons.

Research is also being done looking into different off the field ways to help reduce the likelihood of concussions. Smith says that one of these ways is neck strengthening.

"If you can strengthen people's necks to be able to handle the forces better, (it) results in less concussions," said Smith.

There is no way to prevent concussions completely, only lessen the likelihood of them. Parsons' new helmet will make it less likely for him to suffer from a concussion this season.