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Dr. S. Robert Contiguglia  
President, U.S. Soccer Federation  
1801 S. Prairie Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60616

Dear Dr. Contiguglia:

I am writing you concerning the USSF's stance on protective headgear. On May 15, 2004 my son, Camdon, was critically injured while warming up for the second game of a tournament in Denton, Texas. His team, U-9 at the time, was preparing for the second game when he collided with a teammate during a drill prior to the game. The teammate's cheek bone contacted my son's head in the area around his left temple. Both boys came away from the collision rubbing their heads.

My son played the game and played a very good game. Since it is already very warm during May in Texas, we took the boys back to the hotel to cool them off and re-hydrate them. Approximately three hours after the collision my son started complaining of a severe headache, began vomiting and started to pass out. While one of the other teammate's mothers called 911 on her cell phone we scooped him up and took him down stairs to the parking lot so that it would be easier and quicker for the paramedics to get to Camdon. Another teammate's father worked with me to keep Camdon from losing consciousness while we waited on the ambulance.

When the ambulance arrived the paramedics quickly assessed Camdon's condition and decided he needed to be airlifted to either Cook Children's hospital in Fort Worth or Dallas Children's hospital. They loaded Camdon and my wife into the ambulance and headed to the local hospital to meet the helicopter that would transport him. I was to wait for a call from them as to which hospital he was being flown to for further treatment. I took care of things at the hotel and the other mother's on the team swept up our six year old daughter into their arms to stay with them while my wife and I were with Camdon. We all optimistically thought we would be back later that night. That optimism was shattered a short time later.

After organizing things for our daughter, the father of one of the teammates, the head coach and I waited in the parking lot for a call from the paramedics as to where to go. While standing in the parking lot I had to observe the first of many things a father should not have to observe for their children. I looked up and saw the helicopter coming in and preparing to land to pick up my 9 year old son! My wife called from the hospital in Denton telling me that Camdon was being taken to Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth. Miraculously, she was going to get to ride on the helicopter with him. During the 40 minute drive to the hospital from Denton I made as many calls as possible asking for prayers for Camdon.

When I arrived at Cook Children's Emergency Department they were just taking him out of the room for a CT scan and I was needed to stay behind again to complete the necessary information to admit Camdon. The results of the CT scan showed that Camdon had suffered and ruptured artery and had a large blood clot forming in side his skull. The medical term is an Epidural Bleed.

A pediatric neurosurgeon, Dr. David Donahue, was on call and he performed the emergency surgery to stop the bleeding and remove the blood clot. Dr. Donahue said that he would remove a portion of Camdon's skull, approximately 2" x 3", to gain access to the bleeding artery and blood clot where he would then cauterize the artery and remove the blood clot. We were told to expect a 2-4 hour surgery and given all the possible outcomes of the surgery. Many of which are terrifying to a parent. While

waiting in the surgical waiting room, we received a call notifying us of that the surgery had begun. Not quite an hour later I answered a call from a nurse in the surgery room stating that the surgery had been completed and the doctor was on his way to speak to us.

Camdon was alive and according to Dr. Donahue we were lucky to have gotten him to the hospital as quickly as we did. If it had taken another 15 – 30 minutes the outcome would not have been good. Dr. Donahue said that the blood clot he removed was the size of his fist! Again, Dr. Donahue went over what we could expect after surgery, including a hospital stay of at least 7 days or as long as 6 months. Dr. Donahue said that most likely the injury occurred because the cheek bone is extremely dense at this age and that the sides of the head are still very thin comparatively.

Three days later Camdon was released from the hospital. It was a very long summer for a 9 year old due to the restrictions placed on him by Dr. Donahue. Thankfully he made a full recovery to return to the soccer field the August of 2004. The only restriction left at that time was no "heading" for 3 months.

When we saw Dr. Donahue for a follow up visit in June he stated that he didn't feel that "helmets" were necessary in soccer for many reasons. At a follow up in August, I presented Dr. Donahue with information I found on the internet concerning the Full90 Headguard. He had not seen or heard of the product even though his own son plays soccer. He stated that with the force of the collision that Camdon had suffered it probably would not have prevented any injury, but that it definitely would have reduced the severity of the injury.

To read the recent negative statements by the USSF concerning the use of protective headgear is extremely upsetting as the parent of a child that very nearly died due to a collision on the soccer field. A collision in which, "heading" the ball wasn't even involved. The ball never left the ground in the drill. For the USSF to say in a negative manner "There appears to be a significant increase in the use of headgear by youth players 12 and under, even though players at this level are the least likely to engage in play that would lead to concussions." Is a slap in mine and Camdon's face and in essence saying that the USSF does not care if he or any other player is seriously injured playing soccer or even dies!

It sure seems to me that the USSF should go out of its way to protect the future of soccer! Its youth!

I would love to speak to you personally to see how you feel you can justify the statements of the USSF concerning protective headgear. As you can see from Camdon's story, concussions aren't the only injury that the soccer community should worry about when talking about protective headgear. I have enclosed a picture of Camdon taken the day he got home from the hospital. You can clearly see the 32 stitches in his head and the scar left from the surgery as a reminder of the dangers of soccer.

Sincerely,

John A. Burdsal  
Midland Soccer Association  
U-5/PeeWee Boy's Commissioner

Enclosed: Picture

CC:  
E.D. Hill, Fox News  
Bob Ley, ESPN  
60 Minutes