

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SECTION II
Total Time - 2 hours, 15 minutes**

Question 1

Suggested reading and writing time – 55 minutes.

It is suggested that you spend 15 minutes reading the question, analyzing and evaluating the sources, and 40 minutes writing your response.

Note: You may begin writing your response before the reading period is over.

(This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Over the past decade, studies have revealed the harmful effects of head injuries sustained by playing football at both the amateur and professional level. Widespread attention has been paid in particular to the degenerative brain disease Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), which is sustained through a cumulation of blows to the head.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that **develops a position on whether or not secondary schools (middle and high) should have football teams.**

Your argument should be the focus of your essay. Use the sources to develop your argument and explain the reasoning for it. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (Getty Images)

Source B (Ryan Matee, The Ringer)

Source C (KTVU news piece)

Source D (Drew Magary, Deadspin)

Source E (Wasserman, cartoon)

Source F (John Keilman, Chicago Tribune)

Source G (Mike McCann, USAfootball)

Source A



Source B

McAtee, Ryan. "Danny Trevathan's Vicious Hit on Davante Adams Was a Painful Reminder of the NFL's Head Trauma Problem" The Ringer.com <https://www.theringer.com/nfl/2017/9/29/16382876/packers-bears-davante-adams-danny-trevathan-hit> Accessed 6 20 2018.

In the third quarter of the Bears-Packers Thursday Night Football game, with the Packers driving toward the end zone, Green Bay wideout Davante Adams ran across the middle of the field, looking for a routine pass from Aaron Rodgers. He found it, and seconds later Bears linebacker Danny Trevathan found him. Chicago safety Adrian Amos already had Adams wrapped up, but Trevathan soared into the play, lowered the crown of his helmet and slammed into Adams.

The resulting hit was brutal.

Trevathan's hit was so vicious that it forced Adams's mouth guard to shoot into the air. The image of it floating as Adams falls helplessly to the ground is haunting. Immediately, several players from both teams began calling for medical attention for Adams, who laid motionless on the ground. Adams was eventually put onto a stretcher, taken through the tunnel, and sent to the hospital via ambulance. He flashed a thumbs-up as he was taken off the field.

While Adams's injuries have yet to be diagnosed, it's worth noting that, in a refrain all too familiar to players who have made it to the NFL, Adams has a history with concussions. His only reported concussion came in [October 2016](#), after he took a hit in a game against the Dallas Cowboys. Initially, he told reporters that he didn't have a concussion, but he was then put through the protocol before [returning four days later](#) to play in another Thursday Night Football game. In July, Adams also partnered with one of his former Pop Warner coaches [to create a tool to help screen for concussions in youth football games](#).

The NFL has had a problem with head trauma for virtually its entire existence, and has been unable to avoid the controversy in recent years. The concussion protocol was instituted in 2009. In July, [Boston University discovered CTE in 110 of the 111 brains of NFL players it studied](#). On Tuesday, BU announced that it is moving closer to finding a way [to diagnose CTE in living patients](#). If those researchers are correct, the findings from such a development [could eventually spell the end of the NFL](#) if young athletes—or current NFL players—decide the sport is too violent to pursue or potential fans tune out [rather than face a moral reckoning every time they turn on a game](#).

On Thursday night, the league, fans, and players got a sickening reminder of why that research is necessary. Because if football doesn't fix its head trauma problem, the sport is surely doomed.

Source C

"Richmond high school football coaches aim to change negative stereotypes". KTVU.com 11/18/ 2016, <http://www.ktvu.com/news/coaches-with-inspiring-richmond-high-school-football-team-every-step-of-the-way>, Accessed 6 20 2018.

Richmond's John F. Kennedy High School football team is experiencing one of their best seasons in nearly 30 years.

The team is 10-1 with a playoff game Saturday. Their leader is Richmond native George Jackson Jr.

"When people see our school and people see our city, the first thing they think is negativity," says Jackson.

He's in his first year as head coach and is trying to change the negative stereotype of the city and the school.

The district only requires players to have a 2.0 to play. But not this team, a 2.5 is needed to take this field and their grades are checked weekly. Because for Jackson this team is more than just his players they're his family. "All day long, we family. We family blood couldn't make us any closer right now," says Jackson.

For some members of the team, their fellow players are the only family they have.

"My mom died. She got shot in San Francisco in 2008. My dad died last year end of last year to lung cancer," says Kennedy High Junior Malik Garner. "It's been rough I lost a lot of people in my family, a lot of people from my neighborhood to the streets," says Kennedy High Junior Eugene Gaines.

Gun violence is an all too common occurrence for these young men. "Merely 1,300 feet from here is a war zone. There's been a lot of folks that have been killed right over there in John F Kennedy Manor," says community organizer and football team volunteer Rodney Alamo Brown.

"We've been right here in practice and see people lose their lives right across the street in practice in broad daylight," says Jackson.

Richmond's homicide rate has gradually increased over the last three years. 11 people were killed in 2014, 21 in 2015 and 23 so far this year.

Senior Ryan Robinson knows firsthand about losing someone. February 4, 2014, is a day he'll never forget. It's the day Robinson lost both of his brothers to gun violence in Vallejo.

"My second oldest brother was just riding a go cart and somebody pulled up on him and shot him. My brother went to Vallejo to my aunt's house to be with the family and when he went to the store he got killed too," says Robinson.

Source D

Excerpt from

Magary, Drew. "My 100 Concussions: Notes From A Terrified CTE Study Participant"

Deadspin.com [https://deadspin.com/5967105/\[object%20Object\]](https://deadspin.com/5967105/[object%20Object]) Accessed 6/20/2018

As a person who suffers from concussion aftereffects, I'm terrified of what life has waiting for me. How messed up is my brain already that there are days I can't remember that the thing I'm using to write on paper that ink comes out of and fits in my hand is called a PEN?

There are days when I feel sideways and can't function the same way I'm supposed to. There are spots on my skull that hurt to touch. I have episodes where my motor control goes to hell and I can't talk without stuttering so bad that my girlfriend has to almost treat it like pantomime. Here's the thing though: I was never in organized sports. I was a band geek in high school and college. But growing up, when everyone else broke their leg or arm, I hit my head. Slipped in the cafeteria and went ass over tea kettle, landing forehead first on school tile. Bobsled went off the track at a fun park, and I went face first into rocks. The front wheel locked on my bike, and guess what? I learned firsthand what it feels like to have your skull dribbled on concrete.

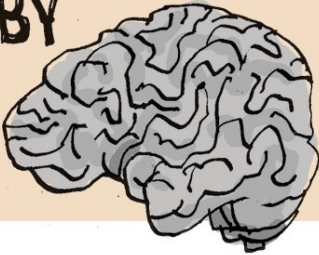
I have symptoms all the time of post-concussion syndrome. I have episodes where I start stuttering and can't speak clearly. I'll lose track of a word mid-sentence. I'll wake up some days and feel like my whole body is sideways and nothing really runs right the whole day. I'm playing catch up, having to work REALLY hard to pay attention, to do things right, etc. Those are getting slowly worse as I get older (I'm 36). But I never played a down of organized football.

I've been to a neurologist. There isn't anything structurally wrong with my brain that they can see on an MRI/Catscan. But the symptoms persist, and like I said, they aren't getting better. There isn't a fix that is easy, but it is helpful knowing about it and doing the things to control an episode when it comes on (anti-anxiety medicine does wonders).

Then you talk about what your symptoms were after each hit. Did it last for hours/days/weeks? Was it just a headache or did you have other symptoms? Were you nauseous? Did you throw up? Were you sensitive to light? In my case, a couple have resulted in weird motor control issues... I couldn't stop shaking my hands once. I looked like someone waving on a parade float but on meth.

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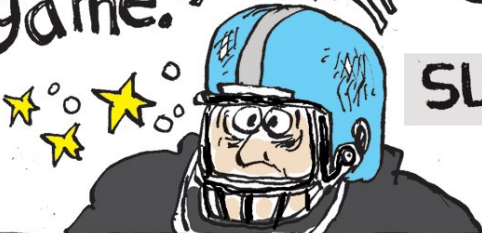
CTE Official Brain Disease of the NFL



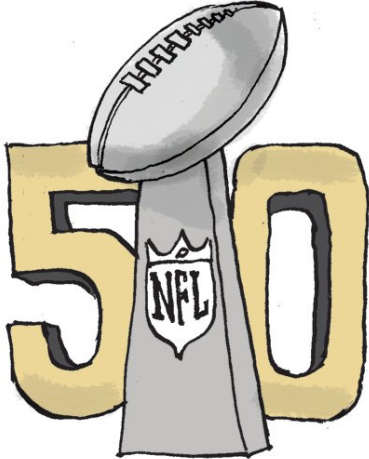
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Source F

Keilman, John. "Youth football participation declines as worries mount about concussions, CTE", Chicago Tribune, 9/5/2017, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/Ct-football-youth-decline-met-20170904-story.html>. Accessed 6/20/2018.

The artificial turf outside Addison Trail High School was alive with action as a practice session of the Addison [Cowboys](#) youth football club got underway. Shoulder pads cracked, coaches hollered and cheerful parents kept watch on the sidelines — all signs, to the inexperienced eye, of a sport in good shape.

But ask club commissioner Ron Maxwell about the state of youth football and he'll tell you it's not like it was a few years ago. Not even close.

"(The field) was full," he said. "It was full of players. We all couldn't practice here. ... It was crazy when we had 12 teams."

The Cowboys are now down to four teams, a decline that mirrors the uneasy state of youth football in the Chicago area and beyond. One program, run by the Park District of Highland Park, shut down last month after only 11 kids signed up, down from a peak of more than 150. Coaches and youth league officials say several factors are responsible for the drop-off. Sports such as fall baseball are attracting kids who once would have played football. A fickle economy is forcing dads who used to volunteer to focus on their jobs. And video games and smartphones are proving more of an attraction than helmets and tackling dummies.

But the big reason behind the slide, they say, is growing concern about head injuries. News stories about former NFL players diagnosed with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, the degenerative brain disease better known as CTE, have parents rethinking their children's participation.

"It certainly doesn't help that concussion is on a lot of moms' minds," said Adam Campbell, who runs Chicago's Canaryville [Lions](#) program. "And I'm hearing it from dads who are saying, 'I played but I don't want my kids to play.'"

Source G

McCann, Mike. "15 Life Lessons from football". *USAfootball.com*. 2 April 2018. Accessed 12 February 2020.

While I had my share of injuries in a decade of playing football, nearly all came during my college years, when the speed and intensity ticked up quite a few notches.

And I wouldn't trade my experience for anything in the world.

I played football from the time I was 12 years old until I was 22. I earned a full scholarship to play safety at Charleston Southern University, and was fortunate enough to have my education – a bachelor's degree and the better part of an MBA – paid for because of my physical abilities.

The lessons I learned from football are priceless. They've helped me in my post-football career (yes, there's life after football). I learned how to tackle people and catch a leather ball, but more importantly, how to lead others and the value of practice. I learned life skills that many of my peers are still trying to figure out at 30 years old.

I was given an unfair advantage because of the time I spent playing football. Not only did I have a support group of peers who looked out for me, I was blessed with a number of mentors who cared about me and wanted me to succeed.

The media endlessly talks about the risks of football and the danger of collisions. What's often overlooked are the benefits that come from the game. The life lessons that young men learn while they play it are priceless.

1. How to compete: There are two types of competition: competition with others, and yourself. Football teaches both. When you face an opponent, you have to study film (research) and think critically about how to beat them (game theory), come up with a game plan (planning), and make that plan come to life (execution).

2. How to be disciplined: From the schemes our coaches drew up, to early-morning workouts, to the focus required to keep my grades above a certain level, I needed discipline for every aspect of the sport. By the time I finished football, I had no choice but to understand discipline and enforce it throughout the rest of my life.

3. How to work (really) hard: 99.9 percent of resumes say "hard-working" somewhere on them. Think about your workplace. Are 99.9 percent of your coworkers hard-working? Probably not. This isn't to say sports are the only way to learn hard work, but it's a great start. In football, you can earn a name for yourself by outworking your teammates. It's an unfair advantage that's accessible to everyone by changing attitude.

4. How to lead: Leadership is a billion-dollar industry. Managers pay for leadership training, and they pay to learn how to lead themselves. Coaches lead teams, but only to a certain extent. Go to any high school football stadium on a Friday night, and you'll see more than a few leaders who encourage their teammates when the score isn't in their favor. Leadership is learned in many ways, and in football, it's learned early.

5. How to follow: With the apparent lack of respect for others we see in the news, this is extremely important. Before you can lead, you have to know how to follow. Study how other leaders do it, how they inspire others and motivate the people around them, and when to stand up for something and when to let the coach do their job. Leadership is rare, but everyone needs to know how and when to follow.

Sample Football Synthesis Essay

Italics = topic sentence

Bold = concession

Italics bold = qualification (if used; remember that this isn't always necessary)

Highlight = line of reasoning

Highlight underlined = synthesis (tying together ideas in this paragraph and reaffirming the thesis)

Football, **while a barbaric sport**, is the king amongst all team sports in America. Over the past decade, though, research has revealed many of the concerning health ramifications of playing football. **While there are indeed many disturbing possible physical effects that can be suffered from playing football**, there is a reason football is so popular, and why students start playing it as early as elementary school. It's because there are many benefits that are brought to schools that have teams. **Most** secondary schools should have football teams, because the sport provides a great source of life lessons for players, and it contributes to a positive school culture.

While the news has made much of concussions and brain injury, *there are lasting life values that can be gained from playing youth football*. Mike McCann included several of these benefits in his article "15 Life Lessons from Football." Some of these lessons included "How to compete" and "How to be disciplined" (Source G). **High school and middle school is meant to prepare students for a life after graduation. What better way to learn about these lessons than in the act of playing football? Indeed, many students who play football are often not the most scholarly students.** Most high schools only require a "2.0 GPA to play" (Source C). **Schools should prepare ALL their students for a productive life after graduation -- not just the college-bound scholars. Football is a great motivator for many students to continue attending school and helping their team win. Taking away football from middle and high school students removes a valuable place to learn teamwork, the value of practice, and the importance of following directions, skills that will serve them long after they're done playing the sport.**

*Football in **most** secondary schools benefits not just the students who play it, but also the entire school culture and connotations of the school itself.* A 2016 KTVU article depicts how the success of a Richmond football team is part of the coach's vision to "change the negative stereotype of the city and the school" (Source C). **In *most* high schools and colleges, the success of a football program is often held as one of the strongest sources of pride. Even at the smallest high schools, Friday nights in the fall are when parents, students, and community members pack into bleachers around the country and cheer for the varsity team. Taking away high school football takes away this unique opportunity. It takes away mascots and cheerleaders and marching bands that contribute to the school culture. It's indeed true that there are risks that come with playing football, made evident in the horrific images of players carted off the field** (Source A). **But for many high schools, athletic injuries are a small price to pay compared to the harsh realities of students' lives**, which can include living in an area where the murder rate results in players losing family members to gun violence in "broad daylight" (Source C). **While not all programs are in such a harsh environment, most secondary schools could benefit from the positive spirit and camaraderie inspired by a football team. Student spirit is a difficult emotion to build, and it is an important component in inspiring**

Sample Football Synthesis Essay

students to do their best every day. Football programs provide this accessible outlet for the school to become more unified and positive.

As research continues to reveal the risks associated with football, **there is a rising and justified concern with letting our nation's youth take part in the sport.** But there are risks associated with many of the most mundane activities in life. Injuries can be sustained slipping while walking, resulting in concussion symptoms for a self-described "band nerd" (Source D). The risks associated with secondary football programs ultimately do not outweigh the many benefits they bring to a school and its community.