

Written evidence submitted by Lauren Pender

Call for evidence

Concussion in sport written evidence

Evidence from Lauren Becky Pender relating to father, John Patrick Pender.

31 March 2021

My father played football professionally with the following clubs: Wolverhampton Wanderers, Charlton Athletic, Bristol City, Burnley, Wigan Athletic and Rochdale, over the period of 1982 - 1998. The detail I set out below, but for the first paragraph, relates to this time period.

When did you become aware of the issue of the link between concussion and sport?

My father became aware of the issue arising from the link between concussion and sport in August 2020. This occurred during a neurological appointment with his consultant.

How were you treated during your career?

Focusing on the relevant part of head injury - during my father's career he sustained numerous head injuries, which we do not believe were given due care and attention. By way of example, during a game between Burnley and Bournemouth in/around April 1993 my father sustained a head injury which knocked him out and also required stitches. My father was removed from the pitch, but this was only temporary and so that the club doctor could administer the stitches required. My father was returned to the pitch within 10 minutes. My father does not recall the provision of any further medical attention / advice / care or any further time for a recovery period once the game had concluded. During a match at York City in around April 1992 my father recalls another head clash incident requiring around 7 stitches. While playing for Burnley, my father was kicked in the face while attempting to head the ball, this injury resulted in further stitches in his forehead, eyebrow, nose and lip. During a Burnley v Northampton game in around February 1992, my father and another player clashed heads. The collision knocked the other player out and once again meant that my father had to have stitches in his head, on this occasion it was 10 stitches. My father does not recall being returned to the pitch on this occasion. However, he does recall that the following match, which he believes was against Cambridge FC and which, following the usual schedule would have been 3-4 days later, he was returned to the pitch, despite his head injury still being prevalent - during the Cambridge game he had to wear a bandage to cover the injury sustained a few days prior. My father does not recall his head injuries ever being x-rayed or generally being given due consideration. Sadly, my father recalls such head injuries being common, and that the treatment of the players was lacking.

Do you think more could have been done at the time?

Yes. Head injuries should have been taken more seriously. Including *not* returning the players to the pitch immediately following a head injury especially not before sufficient medical attention has been received. We aver that stitches at the side of the pitch, without x-rays / further examination is not sufficient medical attention for the head injuries described above. Without conducting the x-rays it is plausible to say that the players who sustained a head injury. which

knocked them out and required stitches, could have indeed also caused a fracture of the cranium and the player might have been returned to the pitch unbeknown to the fracture. Further, players who sustained head injuries should be given sufficient recovery time - i.e. not returned to the play the following match.

Further, the constant heading of a ball during training should not have occurred. During training, my father recalls a football being connected to the ceiling and he was told to constantly head that ball - consequently the number of head collisions my father experienced with the footballs is innumerable.

What changes might you have wished to see?

Better medical care and attention for head injuries - at all levels.

Removal of heading the ball at all levels during training.

For the occurrence of neurological injury in a previous football player to be classified as an industrial disease.

Whether you advise against your children/grandchildren playing the sport for a living?

My father advised that he *would not* advise his children and grandchildren to play in the sport - unless the above changes were implemented.