

# Should our youth be allowed to head the football?

*Toby, Oscar, Charles and Sam – Thursday 16 March 2017*

Football is the most popular sport in the world with nearly 300 million people playing it officially. In the last world cup final alone over 1 billion people watched the final of the tournament. Heading in football plays a massive part in the sport with last minute winners to just winning the ball in the air. But recently there have been concerns that heading could cause damage to the brain especially in children aged 10 and under.



There are many reasons why some people say that a ban should be placed on heading the ball under the age of 10. Firstly heading the ball at a young age can cause neurological problems which can stunt the development of the child's nerves in the head. The main fear is that the child will get Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, (CTE). CTE is a type of dementia associated with repeated blows to the head. Secondly, the US has already implemented a ban on children heading it under this age. Furthermore, Wales are also considering following this rule. Finally, kids at this age are reckless so they might clash heads when going in to the challenge.

We believe that the reasons to not ban headers in football for under 10's are more convincing. Because of the recent surge of worry surrounding headers in football, a new research task was carried out by scientists. In this task, they found out that the risk posed by bouncing balls off the head is in fact very low and heading the ball is perfectly safe. Professional players can head the ball up to 1,500 times through the course of a season and can head the ball with up to 175lb of force. This however is not dangerous as they prepare for heading the ball by tensing their neck and body so that the ball doesn't have a hard impact on their body. In an online poll 78% of thought that under 10's should be allowed to head the ball as they don't see it as dangerous.

Luke Griggs from brain injury charity, Headway, is not convinced there is enough evidence for a ban: "This kind of conversation is really positive but we've got to make sure we don't put people off from getting involved in football," he said. "What we do need is more studies to back this up and we urgently need these studies."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-38951257>