

Name: _____

The beginning of the end for American football?

American football is very big business, and many different groups make a lot of money from it: fanzines, websites, merchandisers, television networks, etc.

5▶ However, the sport is currently facing its greatest ever challenge: mounting evidence of the long-term damage that players can suffer. To make matters worse, it seems that this damage can start when kids begin to play at school; it's not just reserved for the professional elite.

10▶ Even die-hard fans are starting to think that the sport may be becoming too extreme. Charlie Camosy is one of them. He loves American football. At the same time, he says, 'We need to be honest about the fact that football is a violent sport, and one of the many things that people, including me, like about it is the violence.'

The growing concern about the sport has two different causes. First of all, players are getting bigger and faster. This means that, when they run into each other, the impact is greater than ever before. As if this were not bad enough, medical science is also producing more and more convincing proof that players can suffer lasting brain damage as a result of the repeated batterings that are an essential part of the sport. This brain damage can lead to Alzheimer's disease, a form of dementia, and it can also cause mental illness which may end up with players committing suicide. Dave Duerson, who used to play for the Chicago Bears professional team, is one tragic

30▶ example of this. Before he killed himself, he sent a message to his family saying that he wanted his brain to be analysed after his death.

35▶ Despite all these concerns, the sport is booming, with TV audiences the highest in over ten years. Even so, the National Football League knows very well that it has got a very hot potato on its hands. For this reason, it is donating a large amount of money to research into football-related injuries. It is also spending a lot of time looking at the rules of the game, to try to make it as safe as possible. Paradoxically, one of the main causes of injury might be the fact that players wear helmets and a lot of protective clothing. If they were less protected, they would probably be less inclined to crash into other players with such force. An interesting parallel can be drawn with boxing.

40▶ Before boxing gloves were introduced, fighters hit with their bare hands, and there were fewer injuries. However, once all fighters started to wear gloves, they began to punch harder, and the sport became more violent and dangerous.

45▶ Many parents are now having serious doubts about their children taking up the sport. This includes parents who are professional footballers themselves.

50▶ Although he has misgivings about the sport, Charlie Camosy plans to watch it again this season. However, this could be the last year that he does. As he says, 'How long can I watch football and keep my soul?'

1 Answer the questions *in your own words*.

- 1 Why should TV networks that show American football be worried?
- 2 What two major problems does American football face?
- 3 What is the possible similarity between American football and boxing?

2 Say whether the statements are true or false.

Quote from the text to justify your answers.

- 1 Charlie Camosy is having doubts about American football.
- 2 Dave Duerson believed that he had brain damage.
- 3 The National Football League isn't worried about the bad publicity.
- 4 Professional players encourage their children to take up the sport.

3 Find words in the text that mean the opposite of:

- 1 indifferent, uninterested (paragraph 2)
- 2 temporary, momentary (paragraph 3)
- 3 covered, protected (paragraph 4)
- 4 stopping, giving up (paragraph 5)

4 Complete the sentences *in your own words*.

- 1 If American football didn't exist, some TV networks
- 2 Dave Duerson's family
- 3 A lot of money
- 4 Before boxers wore gloves, they

5 Write a summary of the first two paragraphs in 40 words.