

Super Bowl Will Feature Safety Ad



This Sunday is the Super Bowl in the US, an event watched across the world. Some people tune in because they love football; others watch for the creative ads. This year, the NFL is running an ad of its own during the game—and the ad's focus is on safety.

Touting Changes Made to Improve Player Safety

As reported in the *New York Times*, for the first time, the NFL will use one minute of its valuable commercial time during its main event to address player safety.

The league spent several million dollars on the creation of the ad and a related Web site—nfl.com/evolution—that will go live on Sunday and give detailed information about the history of the game and various rules changes made to improve player safety. And by running the ad, the NFL is giving up millions in revenue. After all, the average cost for 30 seconds of ad time during the Super Bowl is \$3.5 million.

Although some league executives were sceptical about the ad, two owners of the teams that will play in the Super Bowl, John Mara of the Giants and Robert K. Kraft of the Patriots, supported the idea.

The NFL is currently embroiled in several lawsuits accusing it of concealing information on the impact of concussions on players. Clearly, the ad is an attempt to improve its image of insensitivity to player safety issues.

The commercial, directed by Peter Berg, who created the TV program "Friday Night Lights," takes viewers through the evolution of the game's rules and equipment. For example, a leather helmet peels back to reveal a more modern one made of plastic. Later, a player grabs an opponent's face mask, a violation of current rules.

The ad's closing message, delivered by Baltimore Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis, is

"Here's to making the next century safer and more exciting. Forever forward. Forever football."

Safety Stats

The NFL *has* taken steps to improve player safety, although some would argue it hasn't gone far enough. And the people the changes are aimed at protecting—the players—haven't always embraced these changes.

But there does seem to be some improvement in player safety. For example, according to figures compiled by team medical staffs, the number of concussions in preseason and regular-season games dropped 12.5% from 2010 to 2011, with 218 concussions reported in 321 games last season as compared to 190 concussions in 320 games this season. (Of course, only 141 concussions were reported in the 2006 season.)

However, at the same time, there has been an increase in the number of days of practice and games missed due to concussions. In 2006, players missed an average of half a day after suffering a concussion. In 2009, the average was three days. This season, it was six. This trend is actually a positive one, though, as it suggests teams aren't rushing injured players back onto the field before they've fully recovered.