

New Helmet for Spleen Allows Mononucleosis Patients to Play Contact Sports

EAST RUTHERFORD, NJ—Athletes afflicted with infectious mononucleosis, a disease caused by the Epstein-Barr virus and sometimes marked by splenomegaly, will soon be able to participate in contact sports throughout the course of their illness. Long counseled to avoid physical activity due to the threat of a life-threatening splenic rupture, these patients will no longer be sidelined thanks to a technologically-advanced sports-medicine innovation: the splenic helmet—a hard, plastic helmet that fits snugly around the spleen.

The inventors of this ingenious, life-saving product were inspired by the success of the head helmet, which has virtually eliminated concussions and chronic traumatic encephalopathy in football players [Ed. Note: Reminder to self—gotta fact-check this claim prior to publication]. With two simple intraabdominal surgical procedures—one for sizing/fitting of the spleen and one for installation of the splenic helmet (plus one more later on for removal of the helmet after resolution of the infection)—the athlete can safely return to the field. As he is pounded in the abdomen by a 300-pound lineman, he will be comforted by the fact that a hard helmet is encased around his spleen, protecting it from rupture.

“Not many people know this,” said Sam Darnold, quarterback of the New York Jets football squad, who missed 3 games in the fall of 2019 after being diagnosed with mononucleosis, “but I was the first person ever to have the splenic helmet inserted.” Darnold added that they planned to implant a special helmet painted Gotham green and emblazoned with the Jets logo, but he ultimately opted for a pink bicycle helmet covered in unicorns, thinking that would give him better luck.

Darnold had the splenic helmet installed within days of the mono diagnosis and would not have missed any games but for some unforeseen circumstances: his spleen ruptured! So much for the lucky unicorns! It turns out his spleen was not done enlarging, and with a fixed helmet surrounding it, the expanding organ had no room to grow, leading to its eventual bursting. Whoops!

Despite that small, utterly unpredictable setback, physicians and athletes are

thrilled about the game-changing splenic helmet. Next up, designers of this product plan on inventing a brain helmet. “Even with the resounding success of the football helmet,” said the splenic helmet inventor, “we think we can do even better if we surgically place a helmet directly around the brain.”

“A helmet around the brain, huh? Why didn’t I think of that?” thought God, up in Heaven, as He tapped His skull.