

LEAGUE OF DENIAL

The NFL's Concussion Crisis

2 X 53 HD



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The National Football League, a multibillion-dollar commercial juggernaut, presides over America's indisputable national pastime. But the NFL is under assault as thousands of former players and a host of scientists claim the league has tried to cover up how football inflicted long-term brain injuries on many players. What did the NFL know, and when did it know it? What's the truth about the risks to players? What can be done?

In a special two-part investigation, *League of Denial: The NFL's Concussion Crisis*, FRONTLINE and prize-winning journalists Mark Fainaru-Wada and Steve Fainaru of ESPN reveal the hidden story of the NFL and brain injuries.

The film investigates how, for years, the league worked to refute scientific evidence that the violent collisions at the heart of the game are linked to an alarming incidence of early-onset dementia, catastrophic brain damage, and other devastating consequences, even death.

The investigation draws on more than 200 interviews with scientists, doctors, and former players, including some of the NFL's all-time greats, as well as previously unpublished medical records, NFL memorandums, and e-mails.

League of Denial chronicles the discovery of a devastating neurological disease in the brain of the Pittsburgh Steelers legend Mike Webster, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), which was likely incurred during Webster's 17-year NFL career. As FRONTLINE reports, the response from the NFL to Webster's diagnosis was swift. The league demanded a retraction of the scientific paper explaining the diagnosis, insisted there was no evidence linking football to chronic brain disease, and used its own heavily funded research arm to try to kill the findings and discredit the researchers behind them.

The discovery of CTE in Mike Webster was only the beginning. FRONTLINE investigates how the NFL responded to the growing body of scientific evidence that football was putting the brains of its players at risk. But professional, adult athletes aren't the only ones at risk. As FRONTLINE reports, scientists are finding evidence of CTE in high school athletes, too.

Now the league faces another challenge: More than 4,200 former players have filed lawsuits claiming that their playing football led to brain damage. As *League of Denial* shows, it's a confluence of events for the NFL that may threaten the future of the game.

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CREDITS

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