

Huffines Institute Podcast – 3/8/13

Mr. Karl Kapchinski

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Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hello and welcome to the weekly edition of the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance podcast. We are so glad that you took the time to download us and are joining us. Every week we bring you an interesting individual for the world of Sports Medicine and Human Performance, and this week is no exception. Actually it is a returned guest and we are so glad to have him back. We have Mr. Karl Kapchinski and if you don't remember his earlier podcast, I would encourage you to go back and listen to it, because it was great fun. But, Karl serves as the Texas A&M Assistant Athletic Director in charge of all athletic training. He was the 2005 NCAA Division 1 Athletic Trainer of the Year.

Karl Kapchinski. Wow...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Congratulations, I didn't know that...that's great.

Karl Kapchinski. Thank you very much, I appreciate that.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. He is a Texas A&M native. He graduated from here, many years ago. In 1999 and in 2009, Karl and his A&M staff received the Athletic Training Staff of the Year Award in the Big 12 Conference. You have been active for many years in athletic training circles and we are so glad to have you back on the podcast, Karl.

Karl Kapchinski. Well, I always appreciate the opportunity and the invitation to come by and visit. It is always a pleasure of mind and it is fun to visit with everybody. And so I just look forward to sharing.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah, Karl is one of these guys that I live vicariously through when we watch football games. You know he gets to run out on the field every once in a while, but not as much this year. We had a...you know we won't talk a lot about Johnny Football, other than the fact that we are all thrilled, but injury wise we had a pretty good year, didn't we?

Karl Kapchinski. Well, I can say it now..Yes, we did. We kind of kept it zipped up, just like pitching a no hitter in a game. You don't mention any of the stats as you go along. As the season went on we would look at each other and kind of give a "little thumbs up" as we went along during the season. But, fortunately we didn't have a lot of significant injuries that we weren't able to keep patched up and keep guys playing on the field. We did have a couple of really

significant injuries, probably because nobody knew about them. They generally were practice injuries that occurred on some of our players who were being red shirted or that were on our practice squad. But we were fairly fortunate this year and I think what is funny is we go back and try to evaluate those things. Those are critical elements in the success of your team in most cases. If you can keep your good players playing on the field and keep them healthy, where they can participate at a high level, then you know that you have positive things happening for you. You know Johnny is one of those guys. He has so many positive characteristics about him, being able to be a good athlete, but one of the things is that he, somehow or another, is always able to put himself in a position to not take big hits. And he is a smart enough kid to know when he needs to run out of bounds and when needs to slide or when he needs to kind of configure himself to get away from that big blow. So, you know, we cringed most all the time and it was obviously acknowledged in the Missouri game when he went down on the field and when you could hear a pin drop with 80 or 90 thousand people in the stands. You are thinking, wow this is pretty significant. And fortunately he was able to bounce back from that and finished up the game.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And I would bet, because you get to know these kids on a day in and a day out basis that you guys are rooting for them to stay healthy.

Karl Kapchinski. Yeah, there's no question. We have to give a lot of credit to...and if you haven't had him on you need to have Larry Jackson on your podcast at some point in time. Larry, he is another former student and former athlete, and I had the privilege and pleasure of being able to help take care of Larry when he was a player. And he has gone on and positioned himself and credentialed himself to be a very knowledgeable, strength conditioning coach that understands how to prepare and how to train student athletes, particularly in football. To help, not only perform at a high level, but to stay performing at a high level over an extended period of time. And from the athletic training and sports medicine perspective, not to create injuries, but also how to prepare those student athletes not to develop injuries as we go along the course of the season. If that makes any sense?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right, yeah...And you said it is to prevent injuries during training.

Karl Kapchinski. That is absolutely what it is...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. I mean that is the hard part is when you have an athlete that gets hurt while he is practicing or training that takes him off the field.

[5:00]

Karl Kapchinski. Well, you know the big thing is injuries are a part of the sport. We all know that, I say, that is life blood, that's our job security, if you will. But bottom line is if we can eliminate or minimize the number of problems you have, the better off we are going to be across the board and across the season. And I have to point my finger and I have to give Coach Sumlin credit too, for a lot of that, because the way he manages practice. He has incredible feel to know

when it is time to stop and when it is time to push a little bit more. So it is one of those innate things that he has, a characteristic, because he keeps time on the field himself. We don't have a clock that punches up periods and things like this, so we will be going through and we will just stop practice, because he says, you know what that's enough, and we are done.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. We are done for the day.

Karl Kapchinski. And that is it...we quit.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. You know that one of the reason that I wanted to have you back on, because I wanted to chat with you about some of the return to play issues that we have seen, primarily in professional sports recently. And we can talk about some of these individually, but in particular I wanted to talk about the relationship between the athletic training staff and the physicians that are involved, as well as the coaching staff. I mean you have a big example in September, where the Washington Nationals shut down Steve Strasburg a month early to save his arm. We've talked to those people on the podcast and got their views. Most recently you have the issue in Washington with RG3 who played and got hurt. And there has been a lot of second guessing about that decision. Just this last weekend when we had Rob Gronkowski, tight-end from the Patriots, had a broken arm and came back and broke his arm again in the first game back.

Karl Kapchinski. Right.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. I mean, in general, and those are some big topics, but in general how does that relationship work?

Karl Kapchinski. You know the interesting thing about it is there is a lot of pressure placed on a lot of people, particularly when you are trying to generate success or you're being successful.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Sure, yeah..

Karl Kapchinski. And I think that the big picture is that you have to have people that are involved that are on a couple of different facets. In other words, the physicians have to be strong enough to be able to stand up and know what they are doing and take the call when they have to stand up for a situation, that type of scenario. The athletic trainers, generally those are your first responders, those of the guys who are going to go out there and see and take care of the problems. They have to be the advocate for the student athlete. And then you know, the thing that you and I were talking about earlier, the coaches have to have a great understanding and see the big picture and say how is this going to impact us know, later, for the future, and more so, from our perspective, because we are dealing with young student athletes. Ok, we've got 2 or 3 or 4 years that we deal with these kids, where as you know from if they are really a great athlete and have the potential of going in the future, how is that going to impact them for that thing? Do all of those things run through somebody's head when something happens? Absolutely not, but the big thing about it is that you have to take each individual scenario and evaluate how that is

going to come into play. And the big thing about it is, our staff and our doctors, and our coaches, as well, do a great job of looking out after the student athlete's best interest on the grand scheme of things. And I know that Coach Sumlin, I can particularly speak to football, Coach Sumlin and his staff, he doesn't question if he relies on David and Matt Key and Dr. Bramhall and all of us to give him the information that he needs on whether or not a kid can play. If he is out, ok you let me know when he is out and we will go to the next guy, okay. And that is the reason he encourages all and make sure that everybody knows, hey you know what you are just an injury away from playing and those type of things. So you know our backup players have to be ready to go. So fortunately we didn't have a lot of those problems, but it is interesting some of the scenarios that you brought up because we as a staff were always talking about some of those things. For instance, there was a lot of misinformation over the RG3 injury and whether or not Dr. Andrews allowed him to go back to play or cleared him to play and there was a lot going on and we can't go into all of that stuff, but bottom line there is a lot of misinformation about what was going on there and the scenario was Strasburg. There was a lot of controversy and I say well should they have done it, should they not had done it. Should they have just gone ahead and let him pitch and those type of things like this. So those are always interesting scenarios. A lot of people always want to have a lot of feedback on it.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Sure..

Karl Kapchinski. The big thing about it is that you've got to know what is really going on in the big picture and I think that the interesting thing that most people don't realize is that why you can generalize a lot of how things are being treated. Everybody is different and everybody responds differently and I think that has to be taken into consideration as far as when a person can come back or when they should come back or how they are going to manage it? And there is a minimal capacity to all of this as well, so I think that a lot of those and most people don't understand it. You know this guy came back after this period of time to do this, but it took this guy this much longer. Well, it is not always an exact science in that regards, we are all different people. How our bodies respond and how we heal is different and we talk to people all the time about sometimes people just have better protoplasm than others, if that makes sense?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah..

[10:00]

Karl Kapchinski. Sometimes we have some players that do the same thing and they get injured a lot and they stay hurt a lot and then you get some guys that you will never seem them. Ok and why is that? They do the same things and do the same practice, but it just how they are made up.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. So, now you brought up the Adrian Peterson thing. Everybody had just said he has done great this year, nine yards from breaking the total rushing record and eight months ago he had a torn ACL..

Karl Kapchinski. Exactly...And you know, that is a very good example and a lot of acknowledgement has gone out and what was different about that day? He had an ACL repair. There have been thousands of ACL repairs and some of those athletes they don't respond and come back in the same level as what Adrian Peterson did.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right..

Karl Kapchinski. So you know there is a classic example of a guy who was able to recover and his body has the capability of healing faster than the average person.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. I mean, he was...also, what was amazing is having gone through knee surgery myself, the psychological aspect, I mean six months after my knee surgery I was just starting to get back into some of things that I was doing. And it was always in the back of your mind, that you better watch out when you cut like this or run like this, because you are going to get hurt again.

Karl Kapchinski. Absolutely..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And the fact that he was able to overcome not only the physical, but the psychological aspect.

Karl Kapchinski. You know I think that a lot of things..it is interesting that you bring that up too, because a lot of things that you have to overcome, it is a phase in capability, probably as you well know, it is a trial and error procedure you have to go through. We are going to have to do these things and we are going to have to verify that you are able to do them and not going to sustain a significant injury. Can you ever tear it again? Absolutely...Did you tear it the first time when it was healthy? Sure you did. Ok..So we are going to try to minimize that and we are going to try to provide you with the capability to give you the protection you need while it is in the healing phase. So that when we make sure that when it is all said and done you are as good as you were when it started.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right...right...and they didn't do that with Grongkowski?

Karl Kapchinski. You know I don't know all the details about him.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And we can't really second guess any of these, because we certainly weren't there and from an outside observer perspective.

Karl Kapchinski. You know another thing too that people have to understand is, as I mentioned earlier you have to think about the level of people you are dealing with, okay. Like in a Grongkowski situation, here is a young person that is playing and this is his job and his livelihood. Ok now if he makes it through the game his chance of making more money are good or whatever the case may be and he is a critical element to their team. Is he willing to accept the risk that he might re-fracture this thing if it is not totally healed? Ok..Well those are tough

decisions and you know I have heard of some other cases where people make...and it's the whole thing about the concussions and things like that, that go on. So...Some point in time they have the capability of making that decision now. Has he put himself in jeopardy of having a long-term injury? Probably not, is he obviously going to miss the next game, yes.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah..

Karl Kapchinski. Alright, had he not played in that game would he have missed the game? Well yeah, of course he did. So was it worth the risk or was it worth to try to see how it worked out?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Karl Kapchinski. Maybe it was you know we could argue that if we want to.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. You know we could say the same thing about RG III..

Karl Kapchinski. Correct, absolutely..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. That is correct. Did he put himself at further...Was he going to have knee surgery at the end of the year anyway, probably so. Okay, but again we don't know all that and we don't know all of those details. Is he in a situation where most cases he doesn't take as many blows, now that granted what makes him special is his capability to be able to run and maneuver and things like this. That is what makes him special. Okay, was that eliminated?

Karl Kapchinski. You know I think the way we always evaluate an injury is how if we were to put this person back, do they have the capability of protecting themselves. Okay? Do they put themselves at risk of a quick re-injury or a long term re-injury or something along those lines? I think those are the stairs steps that you have to go through.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. But Karl, as we talk about people like RG3, you've had this situation where you have an athlete who you think is injured, who is standing there going I'm fine, I'm fine, put me back in, put me back in. I mean that was widely reported that he told that to Coach Shanahan and the training staff. He said I am fine, I am fine. I've got to play...I want to play, I want to play. How do you overcome that? I mean concussion is one thing, we will talk about concussions in a minute, but when you are looking at an orthopedic injury like that..

Karl Kapchinski. You know that is an interesting question because there are two ways you have to look at it. Number one is you have to know the integrity and the character of the person you are dealing with...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah..

Karl Kapchinski. Ok. In some cases you can trust what they say, because you have had enough dealing with it and in particular until you know that and until you have been able to determine

what their thought process is and what their character is, I think that you have to always err on the side of conservatism. But there are some players that you know from history and you know from dealing with them, if they were to go down on the field, you just let them stay there for a little while, because they are going to get up and you know that. And you have other ones that when they go down you better hurry up and get your butt out there in a hurry because there is something wrong, because they don't do that. Okay..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right..

[15:00]

Karl Kapchinski. So in a case like this, you are right, players you come up to you will ask are you okay and most all of them will say, oh yeah, oh yeah I'm fine. Okay... Well you generally will determine over the course of time and dealing with them whether or not you know they are giving you an honest answer. And I will give you a classic example. When Johnny hurt his knee, one of the questions and I think that it was actually on TV copy. I actually went up to Johnny and told him, I said look son let me tell you something that I've said, it is important for you, no matter how much you want to play or you think that you need to be in the game, it is important for you, at this point in time to be honest with us. If your knee is bothering you we need to know and I said is you are not honest you are not hurting anybody but yourself. Ok...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah.

Karl Kapchinski. And he looked me square in the eyes and he said, I'm okay, my knee is not a problem, I am fine. Ok... You know what? I knew he was telling me the truth. Ok..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hmmm.

Karl Kapchinski. Because now did he get scared when he first went down, yes... Ok. Now as it is all said and done, he did not have a significant injury. Ok... He got contorted in an unusual way and he got apprehensive...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right...Right...

Karl Kapchinski. So with that being said, you know, most of the kids if you can get them down in a situation like that they will be straight with you and they will understand it. So they know that you are trying to look out after their best interest, even if they want to play. The competitive kids are the ones that are the most challenging. You know the ones that we have talked about particularly, not even outside of injury, but of illness problems, particular like heat illnesses, but the ones that we worry about the most are the kids that sit there and they have been sick all night and throwing up all night, they want to be on the practice field. They are the overachievers and that type of thing. And then all of a sudden you put them back and they won't tell you that there is something wrong with them. They will go out on the field and all of a sudden they have

compromised their whole system and put themselves at risk of being a fatality. So with that being said, you always have to be conscious of watching those guys.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And there are examples out there like that...

Karl Kapchinski. Absolutely...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Of former players that have passes away because they were compromised when they started playing and maybe they got overheated, in particular.

Karl Kapchinski. And it took a lot faster when they thought it was going to be and we have had a couple of players over the course of time that we have dealt with that have come very close to being significant concerns because they just weren't straight with us and they weren't forthcoming with problems that they were having that compromised them being able to go out on the field, and so..We are pretty conscious of all of that, as best we can and that is the reason we have to try to put some other things in places to try to help monitor some of those things. Most of the time the coaches have been real good about, if they see a player that is not doing right or acting the way they normally would, they are going to raise the flag up to you as well, also.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And this comes back to like you said, very subjective. You have to know the player and their personality.

Karl Kapchinski. I think you know, if you don't it's like you said, you know when we go and we host camps and things like this , we don't know these students that are here, we don't know the assets so they may be the toughest kids in the world or then again, maybe they're not, it doesn't matter okay bottom line if they present with any problem, in most cases, we're gonna shut them down or we're gonna treat them on a conservative basis because we just don't know how they're gonna be able to manage these things and you know, the question is, some peoples pain tolerance is a lot higher than others. You know and you say well you know I put him back he can deal with it maybe we're gonna put him in a situation where he is going to injury himself a little bit further so with that being said, that's a bad thing, you don't want to do that, so you know in most cases like that where we don't know the student athletes, we're always gonna air on that side.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. You know a thought just struck me as you were talking here, we know there is a lot of competition on the field, or the basketball court, whatever the teams are, how much collaboration is there between athletic training staffs that say you're visiting and you're playing at LSU and you go there and have an injury, how much collaboration is there between the staffs? I know you have the primary care responsibilities but how do they help out, how is that normally handled?

Karl Kapchinski. Well I can say, obviously just the first round the SCC has been great, I know that in the big twelve I mean we, it was like a big band, the brothers across the board, I mean

there was no issues , we had a couple scenarios where we had some kids that had some significant injuries and their staffs were instrumental and us being able to manage the care of our students, okay, whether it be getting them off the field, whether it be getting them to the healthcare facilities where they needed to go, whether it be they're making sure they have transportation provided for them. Okay it wasn't even something it wasn't even our location and we you know we like to think we would reciprocate in that form or fashion because fundamentally why we both want to win the contest, bottom line is if we can take care of the health and welfare of a student that has been injured that is what our jobs are, whether or not, no matter who we're working for, so the collaboration has been great.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. I mean I think that is something that people don't think about is that while there is competition on the field there has to be teamwork behind, between the teams to make some of these things happen

[20:00]

Karl Kapchinski. There have been rare occurrences where situations have happened where I felt like that maybe we just kind of got left hung out to dry. And you know we're in a situation where we don't know where anything is and those types of things but thirty years I've been doing it I can maybe count on less than one hand a couple of fingers those type of situations have occurred. We had a situation occur here we played University of Texas about four years ago in which we had a player down, they had a player down from a collision that occurred on the field alright their player even had a suspected neck injury. Okay well so you know the interesting thing is that they had a plethora of physicians on their sideline who we were trying to enhance what they were trying to do or facilitate what they were trying to do, but they had so many people they were arguing with each other on their side on how things should be managed. So that's what actually created a bigger problem, it was not what we were trying to do to help them but what they were trying to do of trying to decide what needed to be done. When it was all said and done, my colleague at University Of Texas, we had a little conversation about how some things that we attempted to do, that we shouldn't have. Only because we tried and we should have never done it to start with so we were able to establish some more perimeters on some radiology things that we shouldn't do in our facility that we tried to and didn't work; now it didn't create a problem at the time, but it could have.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. I don't think many people think about that collaboration that has to go on.

Karl Kapchinski. No it great yeah the athletic trainers are great people and they care they really care about the people that they work with, no matter who or what side they are on

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. If they don't the whole business is in trouble, isn't it? Let's turn for a few minutes while we've got a few minutes left to talk about concussions a little bit, because concussions really fall into uh a different area than normal orthopedic injuries I mean a concussion is one where the athlete really may not have a sense of what is going on. I mean I can

think back a year ago Dwayne colt playing for the Browns got wacked, and they you know, you could tell from T.V that he was concussed but yet they put him back in to play later. And then later they said the athletic training staff hadn't seen him get hit and hadn't even looked at him and he was like I..I... as an observer as an interested observer I can't imagine how that might have happened.

Karl Kapchinski. You know that ended up creating a lot of new procedures for them in the NFL which now they hire generally an athletic trainer somebody to be a spotter in the box

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Really

Karl Kapchinski. To watch the game and report down to the field if they see somebody that has a potential injury or problem to make sure that somebody has noted it

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Really

Karl Kapchinski. Yes. Because there are several colleagues that I have had that do that. I know Cash Birdwell used to be the athletic trainer a long time ago at SMU is the spotter for the Cowboys games, in there box. So it's...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Is it feasible that none of the medical staff saw a hit like that?

Karl Kapchinski. I find it hard to believe just because we've there have been cases, obviously, where I have seen or I have been watching one part of the field and maybe the play was here and something on the back side happened that you didn't see but somebody did, but somebody saw that somewhere. Now maybe because in the college game maybe our staffs are a little bit bigger in some cases than in the NFL okay so generally they just have maybe one or two staff people period that are there and a couple of doctors that are there to work with them. So maybe its maybe it's possible I you know, we'll assume that it is because that's what they're doing. So with that being said I think that the biggest issue with concussions is an ongoing challenging thing and there has been so much attention brought to it by the media and by a lot of other different law suits and things. I know there are some ongoing lawsuits particularly in the NFL that have impacted and I will say across the board that I think that college universities and even some cases high school levels have handled and managed concussions the appropriate way on the side of conservatism the problem you always run into is that student athlete who is a borderline case and in some cases that has been a critical case, because they did go back into the game in some cases you know we probably from time to time still have those, because some kids can do a great job covering it up for a period of time, okay and you may not know the difference so you got to decide where you pull the trigger on a kid one way or another .

[25:00]

Karl Kapchinski. It's interesting that you brought it up too because I had a conversation with my colleague at Bryan High School just yesterday and we were talking about that and you know

here in the state of Texas they mandated all kinds of rules and policies and things that have to be implemented and as far as allowing kids when they can go back to play from concussion. Well you know they had already established a set of seven steps they would have to follow before a kid could return from a concussion. Even before the state had ever gotten involved and but as result of the attention and the coach now the coaches think that they all of a sudden have created all these policies and procedures which they have always had to begin with but now the attention has been brought with from the start . So now it was there but we never realized it.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah...

Karl Kapchinski. That's exactly right and you know one of the things you and I were talking about earlier is trying to make sure that we you know do a better job of educating our coaches okay about what things and how these things work and managing those things and if they're gonna hire somebody to do the job that we're gonna do then they need to trust what they're trying to do for them in that type of scenario. So the concussions are always ongoing things and we had our share of them this year and I think that um we , knock on wood, we did a good job of managing those things, we have had no secondary problems or issues that have come up out of those and I think that one thing David and the rest of the staff have done a really good job with or trying to educated the students and the athletes that we have to know we need to be aware because what we're here for you and your health and safety, we can't help you if we don't know that there is a problem. The kid that gets up and staggers around the field, that's a no-brainer, you can figure that one out.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. That's a good pun, by the way.

Karl Kapchinski. So when you come back, when you get the kid that comes back to the sideline, he's dinky and sitting on the sideline of the bench, you know , you don't know what's going on then all of the sudden maybe that kid put himself at risk. So I think they've done a really good job to make sure we educate the kids that they look if you don't feel right if something has happened to you, you got to let us know and we've had and this has been very successful I think that the kids have been very forthcoming they know that we're not trying to hold them out that we're trying to do what is in their best interest

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And what's interesting to me is that I've read and learned about some of this is that the response is variable, people have different, lack of better terms, concussion tolerances. You have some people that will have a hit and will get to pop back up, and you'll have others that will go you know they're gone. There is so much variability.

Karl Kapchinski. Well it's kind of like the same thing we talked about how different peoples bodies handle different things, you know, I got asked a question um the other day about it they said "why does it look like we have so much of this injury or this injury or concussions how are these things" and there was a lot of fear I had I even had one colleague propose to me that they were concerned that over the course of time that the sport of football would probably be totally

eliminated, because of the way that we're going from the injury prospective and the fact that you can't protect the players anymore from injury. You know and one person was sitting there talking about how you know from a concussion prospective, we need to do more with the helmets. Okay helmets are not what prevent concussions, okay they certainly help and you know nobody would go out and play without them but even though..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Nobody wants to go back to leather helmets, huh?

Karl Kapchinski. Well, but you know what you think about it and in some cases two lines thought: number one, you know if if you look at the evolution of the sport okay they started playing without them, okay and I'm sure there were plenty of concussions, okay so they put helmets on them to prevent head injuries and then all of the sudden we start getting all these facial injuries because they didn't have face masks so they start putting bars on the helmets so it can prevent facial injuries okay but what happens is over the course of the time, evolution of the helmet , as it has gotten better, the players have decided to use it as a weapon

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right

Karl Kapchinski. It's become a critical element in the participation of the game as a weapon

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right

Karl Kapchinski. Okay so we don't really want to take the helmet away to prevent them from using it as a weapon, but what we have to do is that we have to do a better job of educating the kids and things are already in place today to do that, we have to be able to determine to make them understand they cannot tackling and playing the game, the helmet should not be a part of it, okay the helmet is a protective piece of equipment that is there to prevent you from having a problem , provided you don't use it to be the problem.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right, right

Karl Kapchinski. So we have to do a better job of enforcing the rules of having the coach's coach and teach contact without the helmet.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right

Karl Kapchinski. Okay what if we took the helmet off and had everybody go hit each other you think it would be the **same**?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. No..

[30:00]

Karl Kapchinski. Absolutely not, but its along that mentality that we have to do to teach the game, we have to, football is a contact sport it's what it is and that's not gonna change, but the

other issue that we have to come in play is that you know when we were younger and the people that were surrounding us, I tell people all the time when I was in the school in the mid 70s' our players at Texas A&M, our offense line on average is probably about 260 LBS. Okay and we had an average side offense we had two massive players that played tackle for us, one weighed 280 LBS. and the other weighed 279. Massive. They were two of the biggest players in college. There is not a person in our offensive line now that is probably weighs less than 300 LBS. and we just got done doing some testing yesterday in regards to you know some of the conditions and stuff and they were running some 40's and we had a couple 300 LB. guys that could run a 4940.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Wow, so that's moving a lot of mass really quickly.

Karl Kapchinski. Okay and my point being now is that over the course of time what we've been able to do is we've been able to take bigger masses.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right..

Karl Kapchinski. Increase their speed and their strength, okay so we can generate bigger collisions okay, but you know our casing that our brain sits in hasn't gotten any thicker.(laughter..) and least even though we argue that sometimes,

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah, I know...

Karl Kapchinski. But the protection part of it hasn't changed any.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah

Karl Kapchinski. Ok, the capabilities of our bodies to protect ourselves, the bones aren't really any bigger or thicker, with some people they are a little different, but on the great scheme of things but when we have collisions. We have train wrecks going on out there. We got big, fast people that are just slamming into people and your body can only handle so much. So we've evolved into this you know this situation and now we've got to figure out a way you know the game is fun and it's fun to watch

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right, oh yeah.

Karl Kapchinski. Okay and maybe we're coming to the end of that era where you know the helmet first kind of tackled you know I don't really remember much until I think Cliff Harris from the Dallas Cowboys was always pile driving in. Bill Bates was the same way, again I followed the Cowboys growing up and you know that was I guess the mid 70s' somewhere in that ballpark and then that's now what you see people were glorified when people saw those kinds of hits.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Well and I think I hope you're right. I still see and you still look and I see from time to time you watch the game and it's a tough job for the official because that's an area that they've got to be actively involved in, they have to be able to enforce that and in most cases

it's easier to enforce a horse collar tackle because it's easier to see but the thing about it is from time to time you will get a kid that will go in and sphere a kid and they'll go head to head contact on them and it happens so fast you don't see it or we've been so grown accustomed to seeing it that we don't notice the difference and that's where we have got to, I think, to help alleviate some of these problems. We're not gonna eliminate them we're going to alleviate some of them. Those are some of the areas we have to go down. And well equipment changes, I'm sure they'll be some more changes in the helmet but then again like you said the brain still moves around no matter what kind of helmet you have on.

Karl Kapchinski. That's right

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah I mean I look at shoulder pads and you look at films of football from the mid 80s' and these massive shoulder pads these guys wore. And now you look at the shoulder pads and even for the biggest guys they don't look to be that big, but you know they are obviously better, but they are. And what particularly you know the foam and the padding they put in them can absorb more shock and things like this so you know there have been a lot of great research has been done and provided. And what's a little disheartening in my prospective is, you know we used to pad up and there used to be rules to make sure these kids were padded up really good, and things like this. Well over the course of time now they just the players have just not wanted to wear any pads. It's hard to get it you know we say these players are supposed to wear thigh pads most of the time all they were is a shell which doesn't pad them at all okay now granted you know we don't see a lot of thigh injuries okay and those type of things and the same scenario what we tried to do is they've tried to stream line their bodies from the pads so basically all they wear for protection is a pair of pants out there is what it amounts to..

Karl Kapchinski. Yeah..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Okay so you know those are issues and areas that don't or haven't really come into play because we don't see that many injuries there. So there are some enhancements that can be done and that will be done. But, the end all is we have to change the mentality of the game back to the way it was a little bit before.

Karl Kapchinski. Yeah..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. But as you said, there's always gonna be injuries, I mean recently I watched the 30/30 documentary of Bo Jackson: You don't know Bo, and if haven't seen it, and I am talking to the audience, you should watch that. A misstep and he had hip problems and had to have a hip replacement and its one of those things you look at one film and go that really hurt him?

Karl Kapchinski. Exactly it didn't look like anything

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. The guy runs through walls normally and just one bad step during a tackle and it was hip problems. So..

Karl Kapchinski. Well you see that all the time and say well and this is sometimes you call it good luck, I don't know? You see a kid sometimes or you see a play where a guy we'll put it in slow motion and a guy will fall into a kids knee or something and it looks like it probably just shoulda ripped it all the pieces. And he gets right back up bounces around like nothing is wrong with him. And then you'll see another thing that'll just be a really quick blow like boom he did or maybe he didn't even get hit maybe he played and twisted and tore everything up.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Wow, so you're always gonna have a job Karl.

[35:00]

Karl Kapchinski. Well, you know I'm not looking for business, okay but uh we're always prepared when it comes our way.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah, that's true, and I will say and this is a plug for athletic trainers out there everywhere if you're a weekend warrior like me and a recreational athlete and you get hurt people say "where do you go?" And I say "find an athletic trainer". Well because they're used to dealing with athletic injuries

Karl Kapchinski. Well and I will tell you this that you know my son is an outreach athletic trainer works for one local hospital, all the local hospitals now have or employ athletic trainers.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Excellent

Karl Kapchinski. Okay so they're available if as you mention, you need to see one there is one out there at one of the local hospitals and can help take care of you

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah and if you go in to see someone and you realize that they're not an athlete you should go somewhere else

Karl Kapchinski. Thank you for that..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. That's just me..

Karl Kapchinski. I appreciate that..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. So we really have had a great conversation here we are at the end of our time though. What's a take-home message you would give to people from this podcast?

Karl Kapchinski. Well if anything I would have to say is that particularly in youth sports or any type of youth athlete is that the key element is that competitive spirit is a great thing, but you have to use education and common sense as you go along with that. And I think if nothing else is

that we're preparing our kids and one of the things that we have to do is and I have referred to this numerous times during this talk is the fact that we have to make sure that everybody understands that we educate the coaches, the coaches have to be educated to know what to look for. Our student athletes have to be educated to know when they need to report things, okay and you know as they need to know we need to have an understanding of how to teach the games and the events and activities that we're in, so that we can try to do a better job of taking care and providing the best healthcare that we can for the people out there and to make it enjoyable for everybody. You know us and the fans you know we're not hitting each other but you know we want to see them do all that but we can do that in a safe manner.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right that is a fabulous take-home message, Carl thank you for being with us today. Had a great time

Karl Kapchinski. Thanks for having me again I always enjoy it sorry I talk too much

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. No you did great you did great. And I want to thank all of you for taking the time to download us and sharing your life with us a bit today um be sure and go online and write some comments if you liked the talk or not we've had some past broadcast speakers that had really good discussions with some of our listeners so we encourage you to do so. So until next week when you'll join us and we'll have another interesting individual from the world of sports medicine like Karl here, uh we hope that you have an active and healthy week.