

Lawmaker, NFL greats tackle student safety bill

Assemblywoman seeks to protect kids against concussions

By Josh Richman

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Assemblywoman Mary Hayashi was joined by a constellation of former National Football League stars at a Sacramento news conference Tuesday announcing her bill to prevent sports-related concussions among California's student athletes.

Hayashi's AB25, sponsored by the NFL, would require a young athlete who is suspected of having a concussion or head injury in a practice or game to be removed from play for the remainder of the day, and to get written consent from a health care professional and legal guardian in order to return to play.

"Kids want to stay in the game, and believe they need to be tough and play through injuries. But when it comes to concussions, this kind of enthusiasm can be life-threatening," said Hayashi, D-Castro Valley. "High school athletes who sustain a concussion are three times more likely to sustain a second concussion. Such repeated head trauma can be devastating, resulting in brain bleeding and swelling, and related health problems such as sleep disorders,

memory loss and depression."

Joining Hayashi on Tuesday were NFL executives as well as Hall of Fame wide receiver Fred Biletnikoff, who played with the Oakland Raiders from 1965 through 1978; former wide receiver Morris Bradshaw, who played with the Raiders from 1974 to 1981 and the New England Patriots in 1982, and is now the Raiders' senior administrator; former de-

fensive back Eric Davis, who played with the San Francisco 49ers, Carolina Panthers, Denver Broncos and Detroit Lions for 13 seasons; former defensive back and four-time Pro Bowler Leslie "Speedy" Duncan, a San Diego Charger from 1964 to 1970 and a Washington Redskin from 1971 to 1974; Hall of Fame center Jim Otto, a Raider from 1960 to 1974; and former Pro Bowl line-backer Keena Turner, a 49er

from 1980 to 1990 who now is the 49ers' vice president of football affairs. It's second down and 10 for Hayashi on concussions. In January she introduced AB1646, which would've added training on potentially catastrophic injuries such as head and neck injuries, asthma attacks and heatstroke, to the CPR and first aid certification required of all California high school coaches, and AB1647, which would've required athletes

suspected of having a concussion to get a doctor's written permission before returning to play. The former bill petered out in the Assembly Appropriations Committee; the latter was whittled down to deal only with state certification for athletic trainers, and then was vetoed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Her new bill has bipartisan support: State Sen. Tony Strickland, R-Moorpark, is the principal co-author. "As

someone who participated in youth sports throughout my life, I know firsthand just how important this legislation is," he said in a news release. "Student-athletes will oftentimes put the team before their own well-being, so AB25 is essential in ensuring their safety."

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