



**Safer Soccer Campaign Announces Groundswell of Support from Soccer Stars, Coaches, Concussion Experts, and Sports & Health Organizations**

***Kristine Lilly, Julie Foudy, Tony DiCicco, Women's Sports Foundation, The CACTIS Foundation, Conquering Concussions and LA84 Foundation headline new supporters advocating for change***

(SANTA CLARA) – United States soccer legends Kristine Lilly and Julie Foudy, decorated women's national team coach Tony DiCicco, Santa Clara University women's soccer head coach Jerry Smith, the Women's Sports Foundation, the LA84 Foundation and a dozen concussion researchers and clinicians headline a list of the latest soccer, medical, and youth sports experts to announce their support of the Safer Soccer campaign.

Launched in 2014 by the Sports Legacy Institute (SLI) and the Santa Clara University Institute of Sports Law and Ethics (ISLE), the goal of the campaign is to educate parents, coaches, and the soccer community that delaying heading until age 14 or high school would eliminate the No. 1 cause of concussions in middle school soccer and is in the best interest of youth soccer players.

The new supporters join women's soccer legends Brandi Chastain, Cindy Parlow Cone and Joy Fawcett, along with concussion expert and SLI co-founder Dr. Robert Cantu. "The act of attempting to head a soccer ball causes nearly one out of three concussions in middle school," said Dr. Cantu. "This rule change would prevent more than 30,000 concussions a year in adolescents at a critical time in their brain development."

"Safer Soccer is part of the legacy I want to leave for the game," said Chastain, whose penalty kick clinched the 1999 World Cup championship and who is now a coach and mother of a soccer player. "I do not want my players, or my own children, heading the ball before 14, both for their brain health and also so that we can focus our time on foot skills, which are far more important for their soccer development. For players under 14, no headers are a no brainer."

Current guidelines from US Soccer recommend introducing headers at age 10, although many coaches start earlier. Scientific research on concussions has grown rapidly in recent years and helped lead to rules changes in sports like hockey, football and baseball.

"Given the scientific evidence, this has become more than just an ethical question," said Ron Katz of the Santa Clara Institute of Sports Law and Ethics. "In my opinion, it implicates the laws in effect to protect young children who are in no position to protect themselves."

The campaign website, SaferSoccer.org, links to a White Paper where supporting research can be found. Safer Soccer supporters are participating in a social media campaign with the hashtag #NoHeaderNoBrainer, and are posting pictures and videos with their soccer jerseys reversed backwards, to raise awareness that the guidelines for headers should be reversed.

"As part of The CACTIS Foundation and Conquering Concussions' efforts to reduce the frequency and complications of sports related concussions in young athletes, we are pleased to support Safer Soccer in its efforts to eliminate headers in the U14 group. This effort, in conjunction with improved baseline testing and stronger Return to Play and Return to Learn policies, are important steps in this process,' according to Hirsch Handmaker, MD, Chairman and CEO of The CACTIS Foundation, and Manager, Conquering Concussions, LLC." By implementing this policy, in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Scottsdale's new soccer program this Fall, we have begun to take affirmative action on this important issue and as part of Safer Soccer's 'No Header, No Brainer' initiative."

"We are proud to support the Safer Soccer campaign and do our part to make the world's most popular sport safer for the kids who play it," said Deborah Slaner Larkin, CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation. "The concussion rates in youth soccer, especially for girls, are far too high, and these are preventable injuries."

<b>Supporting Organizations</b>	<b>Supporting Concussion Experts</b>
Sports Legacy Institute Santa Clara University ISLE Women's Sports Foundation National Alliance for Youth Sports Positive Coaching Alliance Brain Injury Association of Tennessee The CACTIS Foundation Conquering Concussions ConcussionConnection The UNTOLD Foundation Daniel Brett Foundation Eric Pelly Foundation WiseUp! Foundation National Cheer Safety Foundation	Robert Cantu, MD – SLI Medical Director, Prof. of Neurosurgery, Boston University Laura Balcer, MD – Vice-Chair of the Dept. of Neurology, NYU Langone Medical Center Jeffrey T. Barth, PhD – Prof., Director, Brain Injury and Sports Concussion Institute University of Virginia, School of Medicine Jill Brooks, PhD – Clinical Neuropsychologist Kevin Crutchfield, MD - Director, Comprehensive Concussion Program, LifeBridge Health David Dodick, MD – Neurologist, Director, Concussion & Headache Programs, Mayo Clinic Steve Galetta, MD – Chair of the Dept. of Neurology, NYU Langone Medical Center Dorothy Kozlowski, PhD – Prof., Dept. of Biological Sciences, DePaul University; President, Chicago Society for Neuroscience Leonard V. Messner, OD – Prof. and Vice President for Patient Care Services, Illinois College of Optometry Jeff Mjaanes, MD – Director of Chicago Sports Concussion Clinic at Rush Carl Nissen, MD – Prof., UConn School of Medicine, Connecticut Children's Medical Center Willie Stewart, MD – Neuropathologist, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow, Scotland

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**About Safer Soccer:**

The Safer Soccer campaign was launched in 2014 to raise awareness of the risks of heading the ball in soccer before age 14. Founding organizations include the Santa Clara University Institute of Sports Law ([law.scu.edu/sportslaw](http://law.scu.edu/sportslaw)) and the Sports Legacy Institute (SLI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was founded to solve the concussion crisis ([SportsLegacy.org](http://SportsLegacy.org), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)). Learn more at [SaferSoccer.org](http://SaferSoccer.org).

**About The CACTIS Foundation:**

CACTIS is an Arizona-based 501(c)(3) institution focused on advancing the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. We accomplish this by supporting research-oriented preclinical and early phase clinical trials and continuing medical education (CME) programs for health care professionals. Our current programs are in sports medicine (especially concussions), oncology, informatics and molecular imaging, with a significant attention to addressing health care delivery disparities of underserved communities. [www.CACTIS.org](http://www.CACTIS.org)

**About Conquering Concussions, LLC:**

Conquering Concussions' mission is to be the provider and partner of choice for "Best Practices" facilities for the innovative multidisciplinary assessment and management of concussion patients of all ages through relationships with leading health care providers. To achieve this mission, the organization was founded by, and is continually recruiting, recognized clinical leaders in concussion research and clinical practice to join the Conquering Concussions team. [www.conqueringconcussions.com](http://www.conqueringconcussions.com)