
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Concussion in sport



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Georgina

And I'm Georgina.

Neil

When it comes to sport, there's something for everyone. Do you play a sport, Georgina?

Georgina

I used to play in a netball team years ago. Now I go jogging and I enjoy swimming too.

Neil

Yes, I go jogging sometimes and I play football, although I'm no Ronaldo!

Georgina

But some sports, the so-called 'full contact' sports like rugby, American football and boxing are much more dangerous. Now, the truth about the long-term effects on players who make a career taking heavy tackles or punches to the head is being slowly revealed.

Neil

And the issue of safety in sport was back in the news again recently when Danish footballer, Christian Eriksen, collapsed on the pitch during the 2020 European football championship.

Georgina

At the centre of the debate are worries about possible brain damage and

dementia caused by **concussion** - that's a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump or blow to the head, and the topic of this programme.

Neil

Boxing, of course, is one of the most dangerous sports, and so my quiz question is about a famous boxer. Born in 1949, this boxer has remained mentally and physically fit despite years of punishment in the boxing ring. But who am I talking about? Is he:

- a) Muhammad Ali?
- b) George Foreman?, or
- c) Mike Tyson?

Georgina

I'm not a big boxing fan, Neil, but I'll say b) George Foreman.

Neil

OK, Georgina, we'll find out the answer to that question later in the programme.

Georgina

So far, we've been talking about heavy full contact sports like boxing, but the truth is that any sportsperson can get concussed.

Neil

In 2018 hockey player and Olympic gold medallist, Nicola White, was involved in a heavy collision with another player during a warm-up match.

Georgina

Here's Nicola telling her story to Paul Connolly, presenter of BBC World Service programme, The Inquiry:

Nicola White

I started suffering headaches, nausea, light sensitivity, noise sensitivity, my balance was **off**, I just felt terrible. I always used to describe it like I was in Alice in Wonderland, I just felt in such a **warped** world, it just felt relentless, and it never stopped.

Paul Connolly

Three years on from that moment of impact, Nicola is still **picking up the pieces**. Despite seeking advice and treatment from specialist in the field of head trauma, many of her symptoms persist.

Neil

After the collision Nicola's balance was **off**. When something is **off**, it's worse than usual.

Georgina

And **off** can also mean 'bad', as in 'this milk smells awful – it's gone **off**!'

Neil

Nicola felt terrible and her world was **warped** - strange and unpleasant.

Georgina

In fact, three years after the accident, she was still **picking up the pieces** - trying to return to normality after a crisis or collapse.

Neil

Concussion is a problem in many sports - even those like hockey or athletics that are not considered 'full contact'.

Georgina

But the dangers involved with boxing are far greater. In fact, it's one of the few sports that has concussion written into the rules.

Neil

Yes, that's right. When a boxer is knocked down, he has ten seconds to stand up and get his senses together – if he can't, there's a good chance he's concussed.

Georgina

Tris Dixon is a former boxer turned sportswriter. Here he is speaking to BBC World Service programme, The Inquiry, about concussion in boxing. See if you can spot the answer to the quiz question Neil asked earlier:

Tris Dixon

When you look back through history and you see that Henry Armstrong, Sugar Ray Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis all suffered with neurological problems as they got older... but what we also need to find out is why can you have a fighter like George Foreman, who's now in his seventies, and is **as bright as a button** after two long hard careers. Why do some people seem to have **a reserve** that has kept them safe later in life?

Neil

Tris mentions some famous boxers who suffered neurological problems in later life... and another boxer who's still as **bright as a button** – an expression used to describe someone who's happy, cheerful, intelligent, and full of energy.

Georgina

It seems that some people have a **reserve** – a supply of energy they keep stored up for use in the future, when it's needed.

Neil

OK, Georgina, let's get back to my quiz question – I'm pretty sure you know the answer now?

Georgina

Yes, I think so. Neil asked me which famous boxer, born in 1949, was still mentally alert despite many years of fighting. I guessed it was b) George Foreman.

Neil

Good listening, Georgina!

Georgina

Thanks, Neil - looks like I'm as **bright as a button** today!

Neil

Let's recap the vocabulary from this programme about **concussion** – a traumatic brain injury caused by a knock to the head.

Georgina

When something is **off**, it's bad or worse than usual.

Neil

The adjective **warped** means strange and unpleasant.

Georgina

To **pick up the pieces** means to try to return to the ways things were before a crisis or collapse.

Neil

A **reserve** is a supply of something that you kept back until it's needed.

Georgina

And finally, someone who's as **bright as a button** is very happy and cheerful, intelligent, and full of energy!

Neil

Sounds like our 6 Minute English listeners to me!

Georgina

That's all for our investigation into concussion in sport, but if you'd like to find out more about the subject you can listen again to the whole programme on the BBC World Service website.

Neil

And if you want to grow your brain power, not get linguistically concussed, why not join us again soon for more topical discussion and useful vocabulary here at 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English! Bye for now!

Georgina

Bye!

VOCABULARY**concussion**

a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump or blow to the head

(to be) off

bad or worse than usual; below the usual standard

warped

strange and unpleasant

pick up the pieces

try to return to normality after a crisis or collapse

bright as a button

very happy and cheerful, intelligent, and full of energy

reserve

supply of something that is kept and stored for future use