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Georgia Southern Uses Technology to Prevent Football Concussions

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The Georgia Southern University Eagles football team begins fall practice this morning with new equipment designed to protect players from concussions. Georgia Southern is the only collegiate football team in the state to use the Helmet Impact Telemetry System (HITS) which measures and records every hit to the head during practices and games.

"We want to do everything we can to prevent our student athletes from suffering a head injury," said Georgia Southern President Brooks Keel, Ph.D. "After the University received a \$385,000 National Institutes of Health grant in 2011 to study concussions, we wanted to do more to get a better understanding of these injuries. The addition of this monitoring equipment will hopefully reduce the risks our Eagle players face on the field."



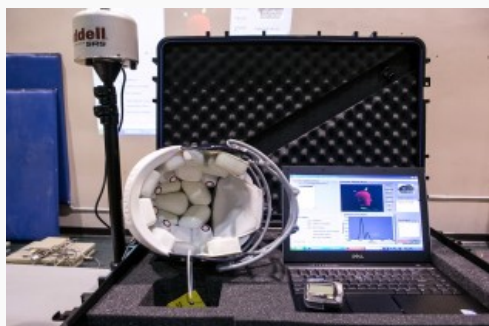
With funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Georgia Southern has equipped 40 helmets with the Riddell HITS system. There are six sensors inside each helmet that measures the severity of a hit to the head. A typical impact in football lasts about 15 milliseconds, and in that instant, measurements from the sensors will be transmitted in nearly real-time to a laptop computer being monitored on the sidelines

of all practices and games.

"While this is not a diagnostic piece of medical equipment, it is an early warning system," explained Tom Buckley, Ed.D., professor of athletic training. "Each time a player gets hit in the head, which can be 30-40 time per practice and game, we can get the calculations on exactly what happened and see how severe the impact was."

If a hit reaches a certain threshold, a pager worn by a graduate research student and the head athletics trainer will receive a notification. "If I get a message saying a player took a hard hit, I'm going to be keeping a close eye on that player," said Eagles Head Athletics Trainer Brandy Clouse. "If that

player displays any unusual behavior, I'm coming over to do a clinical evaluation to make sure that he's not trying to hide it or downplay the hit and that it's safe for him to continue playing."



Each impact will also be time stamped and can be synchronized with game video so coaches, athletics trainers and researchers can better evaluate the hits. "We can look at the body position, see what the athlete is doing and examine the force they experience," said biomechanics professor Barry Munkasy, Ph.D. "We can then consider what can be done to reduce those hits by possibly changing techniques or teaching players what to do to lower their risks that will help improve their performance."

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 125 degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered approach to

education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu.

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