

My name is Sophia Kofoed. I'm a Junior at Miramonte High School in Orinda, CA. I played lacrosse through the Northern California Junior Lacrosse Association (NCJLA) for 8 years, and I will always be grateful to the NCJLA, the officials, coaches and teammates for the wonderful experiences I had playing youth lacrosse.

Over the eight years, starting at the age of 8, lacrosse has given me a voice. It has taught me leadership, commitment, and teamwork. I forged friendships that can only be created through absolute trust among team members. It also gave me the opportunity to bond with my dad, who brought the girl's lacrosse program in my town back to life and coached me until high school.

I am also grateful to the NCJLA leadership for allowing me to help inform parents and athletes about the headgear girl lacrosse players now have an option to wear, which potentially lessens the impact of concussions and head injuries.

US Lacrosse and the NCJLA have taken the issue of concussions seriously. Changes have been made such as changing the composition of the ball, new stick checking and dangerous shooting rules have been introduced, and safety has been emphasized by these organizations. Coaches, players and families are also much better informed of the proper protocols for recognizing and properly responding to concussions. This includes both removing players from play as well as ensuring players receive proper medical evaluation and clearance prior to re-entering future play.

This is personal for me because of my love of the sport and my own experience with a severe concussion.

My goal is to advocate for girls to make the choice to wear headgear in an attempt to ensure no other girl ever has to go through the struggles I have been through. Due to the new standards and new headgear available, girls have the opportunity to do more to proactively protect their brains, while playing the game we love. Parents have the opportunity to protect their children, and possibly mitigate the effects of a potential concussive blow.

Unlike the boys' game, in California, headgear is not required in the girls' game. Recent research has shown that, the primary causes of concussions in the two games are different. In the boys' game it is mainly resulting from physical collision, while in the girls' game the main causes are hits to the head by either a stick or the ball.¹

Every player on any team has the option to choose herself to wear an approved headgear and we are seeing more girls wearing them every year.

¹ There are two ASTM Certified girls headgear products now available. More information can be found at <https://www.uslacrosse.org/safety/equipment/legal-womens-headgear> . These headgear products can be found online or at your local lacrosse store.