

## LETTERS

*If you agree or disagree with anything that appears in this issue, please let us know. Mail your letter to: EMS, Editorial Department, 7626 Densmore Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406. If your fax wishes to contact our fax, reach us at 818/786-9246. Letters may be edited for clarity and to conform to space requirements.*

### **Head's Up?**

I just read the article on helmet removal ("Vital Signs," May issue) and I have a question. I work for an ambulance company in Milwaukee that provides stand-by coverage for the Green Bay Packers. I totally support leaving the helmet in place with suspected cervical-spine injuries. The trainers are the medical authorities when a player goes down. We don't do anything unless the trainers call us onto the field, and we then do exactly as they say.

If a trainer decides to remove a helmet and leaves the shoulder pads on, should we support the head with a towel to minimize hyperextension during transport, or is horizontal in-line stabilization more of a concern?

**Steven R. Krejci, EMT-D, ACLS**  
**Bell Ambulance**  
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*Author Jeffrey Wimer, MS, ATC, EMT, of the Department of Sports Medicine, University of Charleston, WV, responds: It is my belief that most certified athletic trainers would not remove the helmet to begin with, but if one does, support of the head is of primary concern. Sandbags, rolled towels and/or blankets may be needed to keep the head at the level of the shoulders, due to shoulder pads lifting the body from the board. Cervical immobilization devices do not work well when a football helmet remains on a player, but*

*may be of value when a helmet is removed. Again, the EMT must account for the increase in head-shoulder angle discrepancy once the helmet is removed.*

*In response to Mr. Krejci's question, minimizing hyperextension is just as important as horizontal "in-line stabilization." I read "in-line stabilization" as providing traction, and this task must be accomplished in addition to securing the helmet to the board.*

*I would suggest Mr. Krejci speak with Mr. Pepper Burgess, athletic trainer for the Green Bay Packers, to discuss his concerns at greater length, or he can feel free to contact me personally if I can be of any further assistance.*