

Heading the ball, as St. Thomas Aquinas player Braden Culver is pictured doing in the 2012 Halton high school senior boys' A/AA final against King's Christian Collegiate, is a common play in soccer. Oakville researcher Monica Maher recently co-authored a study investigating the potential cumulative effects of striking soccer balls with the head.

| Oakville Beaver file photo



Study in Oakville supported use of headgear

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these sub-concussive impacts over time can be additive to produce the same cognitive effects as someone who has had multiple actual concussions," said the 24-year-old Maher, a product of the Oakville Soccer Club who played for U of T's varsity women's team.

Though the goaltending position did not require Maher to head the ball with any regularity, she has always been wary of potential head injuries in soccer. After Maher took a shot to the head as an early teen, her mother insisted she wear a Full90 headguard to help absorb the forces caused in potential collisions with the ball, opponents, teammates and even the goalposts.

"I've been wearing that since the age of 14 as a preventative measure. At first, I felt like a dork, but now in retrospect that was a really good thing," Maher said.

"Ultimately, I decided I like my brain. I would like to protect it."

The value of wearing protective headgear in soccer was supported in a 2007 independent study conducted at the Oakville Soccer Club. After surveying nearly 300 rep players between the ages of 12-17, 52 of which wore headgear during the 2006 season, researchers determined protective headgear reduced players' risk of concussion by 32.6 per cent on average when it came to head-to-head impact.

The study also indicated that players who considered themselves "headers" did show a trend towards

increased risk of suffering concussions, though researchers allowed the trend may have to do more with style of play and aggression.

"From my personal experience, I think there is some benefit in taking measures to protect your brain," Maher said. "There's no downside to it."

Other measures Maher suggests could protect soccer players from head injuries include padding the goal posts for very young children and delaying the age at which players can begin heading the ball during games.

"The question we get asked a lot is, 'Should parents not let their kids play soccer?' The answer is definitely (let them play). The physical, social and psychological benefits of sports far outway any potential risks, but if steps can be taken to mitigate (risks), that's even better," Maher said.

"The idea of this is not to be a scare tactic or anything. Just be aware of potential risks and when you're on the field, try to avoid placing yourself in a position where you are very vulnerable to injury."

Existing research papers show that concussions account for 5.8 per cent to 8.6 per cent of total injuries sustained during games. One study found that 62.7 per cent of varsity soccer players suffer concussion symptoms during their playing years, but only 19.2 per cent realize it.

— With files from Theresa Boyle, Toronto Star



The Oakville minor peewee A Rangers won both the semifinal and final in overtime to take the championship at the Toronto Avalanche March Meltdown. | photo submitted

Minor peewee A Rangers win March Meltdown

The Oakville minor peewee A Rangers won back-to-back overtime games to take the championship at the Toronto Avalanche March Meltdown hockey tournament.

With the Rangers trailing the Osgoode Rideau Romans 3-2 late in the championship game, James Carroll scored to force overtime. Ryan Sheppard then tallied in the extra period to give Oakville the title.

Carroll had another big goal, scoring in overtime in a 2-1 semifinal win over the Richmond Hill Stars.

The Rangers went undefeated in round-robin play, going 3-0-1. After opening with a convincing 9-2 win over the Uxbridge Stars,

Oakville tied York Mills 2-2. In a preview of their two playoff games, the Rangers topped Osgoode Rideau 7-1 and then edged Richmond Hill 3-2 to close out the round-robin schedule.

Other members of the Rangers are: Noah Darling, Dan Stefan, Riley Cerovcec, Sean Stodulski, James Mackey, John Wesley Appleton, Michael Goverde, Patrick Stewart, Avery Robertson, Quinn Ligon, Ryan Sheppard, Cole Maddox, Matthew Macdougall, James Carroll, Holden Hewitt, Kole Schledewitz, Jonathan Policelli, coaches Bryan Stewart, Brent Robertson and Kevin Hewitt and trainers Ed Stodulski and Lori Schledewitz.

Oakville curlers victorious at Scotland bonspiel

Oakville Curling Club members Michael Maurice, David Hope, David Haigh and Don Goddard won their division at the recent Edinburgh International Curlers' Gathering in Edinburgh, Scotland.

After playing preliminary games to determine which flight it would compete in, the local rink defeated teams from Russia, Switzerland and Scotland to claim the division title. The foursome was the lone Canadian rink to participate in the event, as it was last year when it also won its division.

The Edinburgh International Curlers' Gathering is an open-age tournament that also featured rinks from The Netherlands, Slovakia, Norway and Sweden.



Pictured left to right with tournament organizer Jim Ramsay (centre), Oakville Curling Club members Michael Maurice, Don Goddard, David Hope and David Haigh won their division at the recent Edinburgh International Curlers' Gathering in Edinburgh, Scotland. | photo submitted



Pictured left to right, Lakeside Volleyball Club members Sam Beltran, Julia Kacorowska and Megan Nash will play for NCAA Division 1 teams next season. | photo submitted

Lakeside volleyball players sign with NCAA schools

Three members of Lakeside Volleyball Club's under-18 girls' team recently accepted full scholarships from NCAA Division 1 schools.

Megan Nash will attend Central Arkansas, Julia Kacorowska will go to North Dakota and Sam Beltran has committed to Tennessee State.

"They have been a pleasure to work with, will thrive in the challenges that lie ahead and fully deserve the amazing opportunity that awaits them," said Lakeside coach Bear Davies.

Lakeside is seeded fifth out of 48 teams at this weekend's provincial championships.