



HORRIFIC... Raul Jimenez comes off worse in collision with David Luiz

NUNO BACKS RAUL RETURN

NUNO ESPIRITO SANTO is cautiously optimistic that Raul Jimenez will play pro football again.

Wolves' Mexican striker fractured his skull in an awful clash of heads with Arsenal's David Luiz at the Emirates last Sunday.

Jimenez was immediately taken to hospital, and an update from Wolves on Thursday said the player was recovering well.

Ahead of tomorrow's game at Liverpool, Wolves boss Nuno added: "If you ask me personally, I want him and I am positive he's going to come back.

"Now our real concern

By **GRAHAM HILL**

is that he recovers totally. Raul was really well taken care of on the pitch and in the ambulance.

"Now he is recovering, he's going back home, although we are not allowed to visit him.

"Everything goes through your mind when you see someone who you love in a tough situation.

"You're worried because he means so much to us, it's like someone in the family being ill. Raul is huge, what he means off the pitch, as a team-mate and for the city."



DANNY HIGGINBOTHAM ON HEAD INJURIES

FROM a player's point of view, when you are being assessed for a head injury, you don't want to go off.

A couple of times it happened to me, where it was proven afterwards I had been concussed because I was violently sick the next day.

I was asked the question on both occasions whether I felt OK and I said I was fine and wanted to carry on, knowing full well I wasn't 100 per cent.

I was dizzy but, as a player, it is very difficult to say 'I need to come off'.

In those situations, it has to be taken out of the player's hands.

In one game when I said I would carry on, I had no recollection of the rest of the game.

On another occasion, I was playing for Manchester United against Aston Villa in the League Cup in 1999.

I got hit really hard and was caught in the temple and it knocked me sideways.

I turned around to our keeper, Mark Bosnich, and had to ask him what the score was. He

signalled to the physio and he had none of it and took me off.

There should be talks into having concussion subs, or temporary subs.

The medical team need to be given the time to understand whether a player is concussed or not, rather than potentially forcing someone to play on.

It isn't necessarily the initial concussion or bang that will have the effect, it will be the next collision in the same game that leads to the serious issues.

If you take players away into the dressing room, without the pressure of the fans and the game, you may actually get players admitting more frequently, 'I'm not feeling great, I need to come off'.

The powers that be need to come up with something that gives greater observation and care.

I once played on and couldn't remember the match

EXCLUSIVE PETR CECCH ON THE DEMENTIA DEBATE

Banging the drum for safe heading

..AND MAKING MUSIC TO RAISE CHARITY CASH



BETWEEN THE STICKS... former goalkeeper Cech has been drumming since his 20s

By **JUSTIN ALLEN**



PETR CECCH almost lost his life after fracturing his skull during a Premier League match 14 years ago.

The keeper wore a rugby scrum cap (below) as a safety measure for the remainder of his career with Chelsea and Arsenal.

So he knows all about the dangers of head injuries in football.

Big-hearted Cech, 38, is also raising funds for a dementia charity.

As a keen drummer, he has teamed up with Wycombe boss and vocalist Gareth Ainsworth to make a Christmas record to help a cause close to their hearts.

But one thing is clear – Cech is not in favour of banning heading, especially for kids.

This year football has lost England 1966 World Cup winners Jack Charlton and Nobby Stiles to dementia.

The FA recently banned children under the age of 11 from heading balls in training and there have even been calls to outlaw the practice in the game, full stop.

Just last Sunday, Wolves star Raul Jimenez fractured his skull in a sickening clash of heads with Arsenal's David Luiz.

But Cech said: "We can't take things like heading out of football because it wouldn't be the same game. That's not the way forward."

"There should be guidelines as to what is too much and what isn't in training."

"In football, there are players who have a great heading technique but there are some that don't and that's also risky."

"If you don't teach a kid how to head the ball in training, they can make contact with it at the wrong angle or timing and can get a serious injury from that. A player can concuss themselves."

"You have to remember children use a smaller and lighter ball – and it's not flying past them with as much power."

"If they get into a good habit of heading, when they move up the age groups and the ball is travelling at 60mph, it won't hurt them because they know how to do it."

"And also just the practice of jumping is important."

"If a young footballer doesn't perfect the art of heading from the ages of, say, six to 11, when they're 12 there's a risk of them seeing a ball ready to head but they don't jump correctly and there's a clash of heads. That's also dangerous."

Cech, who is now Chelsea's technical chief, was lucky after he

GAME CHANGER... Cech's injury prompted a player safety overhaul



collided with Reading's Stephen Hunt at the Madejski Stadium.

The incident in October 2006 prompted the football authorities to bring in safer protocols to deal with players who suffer head injuries.

And the Czech legend believes that, as a result of his own horror moment, players such as Jimenez, Fabrice Muamba and Ryan Mason had their lives saved.

The FA recently banned children under the age of 11 from heading balls in training and there have even been calls to outlaw the practice in the game, full stop.

Just last Sunday, Wolves star Raul Jimenez fractured his skull in a sickening clash of heads with Arsenal's David Luiz.

But Cech said: "We can't take things like heading out of football because it wouldn't be the same game. That's not the way forward."

"There should be guidelines as to what is too much and what isn't in training."

"In football, there are players who have a great heading technique but there are some that don't and that's also risky."

"If you don't teach a kid how to head the ball in training, they can make contact with it at the wrong angle or timing and can get a serious injury from that. A player can concuss themselves."

"You have to remember children use a smaller and lighter ball – and it's not flying past them with as much power."

"If they get into a good habit of heading, when they move up the age groups and the ball is travelling at 60mph, it won't hurt them because they know how to do it."

"And also just the practice of jumping is important."

"If a young footballer doesn't perfect the art of heading from the ages of, say, six to 11, when they're 12 there's a risk of them seeing a ball ready to head but they don't jump correctly and there's a clash of heads. That's also dangerous."

Cech, who is now Chelsea's technical chief, was lucky after he

collided with Reading's Stephen Hunt at the Madejski Stadium.

The incident in October 2006 prompted the football authorities to bring in safer protocols to deal with players who suffer head injuries.

And the Czech legend believes that, as a result of his own horror moment, players such as Jimenez, Fabrice Muamba and Ryan Mason had their lives saved.

The FA recently banned children under the age of 11 from heading balls in training and there have even been calls to outlaw the practice in the game, full stop.

Just last Sunday, Wolves star Raul Jimenez fractured his skull in a sickening clash of heads with Arsenal's David Luiz.

But Cech said: "We can't take things like heading out of football because it wouldn't be the same game. That's not the way forward."

"There should be guidelines as to what is too much and what isn't in training."

"In football, there are players who have a great heading technique but there are some that don't and that's also risky."

"If you don't teach a kid how to head the ball in training, they can make contact with it at the wrong angle or timing and can get a serious injury from that. A player can concuss themselves."

"You have to remember children use a smaller and lighter ball – and it's not flying past them with as much power."

"If they get into a good habit of heading, when they move up the age groups and the ball is travelling at 60mph, it won't hurt them because they know how to do it."

"And also just the practice of jumping is important."

"If a young footballer doesn't perfect the art of heading from the ages of, say, six to 11, when they're 12 there's a risk of them seeing a ball ready to head but they don't jump correctly and there's a clash of heads. That's also dangerous."

Cech, who is now Chelsea's technical chief, was lucky after he

played on until half-time before being replaced as blood was still gushing from his head.

Cech said: "It works brilliantly in ice hockey. I know they have rolling subs but if you get concussed you go off for assessment and get replaced."

"It takes all the pressure off the manager and doctor."

"The doctor cannot properly assess if a footballer is OK in a few moments, while a manager should not have to see his team down to ten men while checks are made."

"There are now concussion tests you can do as a player on a computer and a doctor can usually make a decision within ten minutes."

Cech – who started drumming when he was in his late 20s – was invited to play on

London Country, the latest album by Wills & The Willing.

And he plays drums on a jolly record called Drawing Straws with Ainsworth that they hope can top the Christmas charts.

The song is about Santa Claus telling his nine reindeer that only five of them can head out with

him because of the coronavirus rule of six.

Cech added: "Our director of football operations, David Barnard, loves his music and knew Gareth well because he signed him at Wimbledon from Port Vale."

"He showed me how he performed The Wanderer in front of the Wycombe fans."

"It was great to get him on board and make it more of a football theme."

"It's a really catchy tune. We've done it to put smiles on people's faces after a tough year and make some money for great causes."

Ainsworth, who fronts a band called The Cold Blooded Hearts, said: "Petr is a seriously good drummer. We had a lot of fun making it and hope it makes people smile."



You Petr watch out, Petr not cry

IT'S been a year most of us want to forget – but this song makes you proud to be British.

From Sir Captain Tom Moore to England ace Marcus Rashford, this tune captures the most uplifting moments of 2020.

There's even a



JUSTIN ALLEN reviewed records for the East Kent Mercury. Here, he dusts off his headphones for Drawing Straws by Wills & The Willing, featuring Petr Cech and Gareth Ainsworth (right).

catchy chorus about Santa only taking out five reindeer because of the rule of six.

Cech's hands work as fast as he used to save shots on the drums – and Wycombe

boss Ainsworth remains the game's true rock star.

Downloads are available from Friday – and it helps raise money for a great cause.

● You can listen to the song at thesun.co.uk/football



GUARDIOLA... focus

Porto in the s*t with Uefa

EXCLUSIVE by **MARTIN BLACKBURN**

PORTO'S top brass allegedly called match officials 's**t-eaters' after their Euro clash at Manchester City.

Directors from the Portuguese club made their way down to the tunnel area at the Etihad following their 3-1 defeat on October 21.

And they hurled abuse at ref Andris Treimanis and his assistants over their performance in the stormy Champions League clash.

The shocking outburst was heard by Uefa delegates who were stood within earshot – and is believed to have been recorded in the official game report.

It is one of the incidents from the two matches between the clubs this autumn which could yet land Porto in hot water.

Another is the 'news-letter' released to the Portuguese media by the club on the morning after Tuesday's goalless draw.

It effectively called City midfielder Bernardo Silva racist, while also claiming Ferdinandinho's post-match comments showed that "money in football counts for a lot – but doesn't buy class".

City were furious and issued a strong statement of their own which highlighted Porto being punished for the racist behaviour of their own fans after a game against them in 2012.

Uefa could also take a dim view of it as they say there is an obligation for clubs to comply with principles of ethical conduct, loyalty, integrity and sportsmanship.

Porto also appear to have broken European Club Association rules, although a punishment from them is less likely.

City boss Pep Guardiola was believed to be unhappy at some of Porto's antics but chose to keep his views to himself yesterday.

Asked about the Porto newsletter, he said: "I'm focused on Fulham – that is the important thing."



FANCY PLAYING LADBROKES 5-A-SIDE?

Pick your formation. Select your players. Be the Boss.

Available online & mobile



Ladbrokes
WHERE THE NATION PLAYS

