

Official Newsletter of Football Alberta Equipment Managers

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Getting Started

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information regarding news in the world of football equipment to equipment managers around Alberta as a follow up to the Football Canada Equipment Clinics. I foresee it as a place where questions can be answered, where new equipment can be introduced or discussed, and where problems faced can be addressed; a place where we can increase our knowledge of football equipment to better protect the athletes that we are ultimately taking care of at all levels of this great sport. For this to be a successful publication, input is required as to what you would like to see in future issues; questions you

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would like answered, clarifications on fitting or maintaining equipment, problems you have faced either in the equipment room or on the field, interesting websites that you have come across. **Please e-mail any requests/questions/comments to insidetheequipmentroom@hotmail.com.** Also, to be added to the mailing list for future issues please send an e-mail to the above address.

Helmet Warranties, Reconditioning and Lifespan

This next section is intended to clear up some questions regarding warranties and lifespan of the different helmets on the market.

Adult helmets all have a 5 year warranty on the shell. Riddell, Schutt and Adams provide a 1 year warranty on the components of the helmet, such as the bladders. Xenith has a 2 year warranty on their shock bonnet. Most manufacturers recommend reconditioning every 2 years, but at the very least, reconditioning should be completed following the fifth year. Reconditioning the helmet also adds 2 additional years to the shell warranty, therefore reconditioning must also be completed at the 7

and 9 year marks. Even if your program follows a 5-7-9 reconditioning cycle, if through post-season inspections you feel that a helmet has sustained greater 'wear' and abuse, then it is a good idea to send it for reconditioning out of cycle for full recertification to protect yourself. Riddell, Xenith and Adams all have a 10 year shelf life on their shells. Helmets that have reached the 10 year mark, should not be used on the field in play, and

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Helmet Warranties, Reconditioning and Lifespan (from page 1)

should be safely discarded. Schutt is the one manufacturer that has a different policy regarding lifespan of a helmet. Schutt feels that, as long as the helmet is properly maintained and passes reconditioning on a regular basis, the shell is still useable. This is one of the selling features that Schutt uses; "The Schutt is good forever, so it is cheaper for your program". My concern with this thinking is that helmets are evolving very fast at this time, with a lot of money being spent on research to make helmets safer for the athlete. Do we really want players wearing helmets that are older than 10 years old, regardless of manufacturer, just because the shell isn't cracked, and is therefore 'safe' to use.

Every program has a different philosophy regarding reconditioning and the length of time that they keep helmets. Some programs recondition all their helmets regularly, while others take the money that would go to reconditioning and put that towards buying new helmets rather than recondition. Many

times this philosophy is based on budgetary constraints, but having a regular inspection and reconditioning program in place is important in protecting the program and the players by ensuring that the helmets are safe to use. Each spring Football Alberta provides a free service to programs where Calgary Stampeders' Equipment Manager George Hopkins will visit your equipment room and inspect your equipment and provide you with recommendations regarding reconditioning, replacement, and general observations regarding your helmets.

Youth helmets are a bit different when it comes to warranty, reconditioning and lifespan. Some manufacturers have different warranties even between their 'low-end' and 'high-end' youth helmets. Check with your salesperson or the manufacturer for accurate information on warranty and lifespan for your particular style of helmet. Most youth helmets have a price that make the costs of reconditioning prohibitive.

Reconditioning Helmets – Who Can?

It was brought to my attention earlier this year that there has been some misinformation regarding who is eligible to recondition which helmets, namely the new Xenith helmets and I wanted to clarify reconditioning. All certified reconditioners belong to the National Athletic Equipment Reconditioners Association (NAERA) who are licensed by The National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE). The helmet is stripped down, cleaned and sanitized, and all broken or worn out parts are replaced with new ones. A representative number of shells are also tested in accordance with NOCSAE standards. All reconditioning performed by members of this association, is completed using original

manufacturers parts. When a reconditioner is licensed by NOCSAE, this is not brand restricted, it authorizes a reconditioner to recertify all brands. Therefore, it doesn't matter who you send your equipment to as long as they are licensed by NOCSAE. For example, Riddell/All-American is licensed to recondition helmets from all manufacturers (Riddell, Schutt, Xenith, and Adams), not just Riddell. Most football equipment suppliers provide a reconditioning service. Be sure to check that the company that they are sending your equipment to is certified by NOCSAE. Visit www.naera.net and www.nocsae.org for more information regarding reconditioning and the standards for testing and recertifying equipment.

Riddell Quick Release Face Guard System

Introduced in 2008 on the Riddell Revolution IQ Helmets, the quick release clips allow for rapid and easy access to the player in emergency situations, as well as making the task of changing the facemask a little less time consuming. The original Revolution quick release system can be used on the original Riddell Revolution helmet as well. With the introduction of the Revo Speed in 2009, came a new quick release system specific to this helmet. One of the draw backs to this system is the cost (about \$30) of either upgrading all older Revolution helmets to this system, or replacing the parts when they wear out. With the Revolution or Revolution IQ, original Revolution facemask clips can be used to replace broken parts, but on the new Revo Speed helmet, there is no other option than replacing the quick release with another one when something breaks. At one of the Football Alberta spring selection camps, I found a Speed helmet where the clips had broken. The school had replaced the



Above: Revolution Quick Release Parts; Right: Revo Speed Helmet with Quick Release Face Mask System



clips with traditional VSR-4 facemask hardware. The problem with this is that the holes in the shell for the facemask clips are larger to allow for the rubber grommet and quick release parts, therefore using the traditional facemask clips will cause the mask to 'rattle around' and not provide a proper tight attachment to the helmet. Although costly to a program, it is imperative that the proper parts are stocked and used to replace broken clips on these new helmets.

Proper use of the Xenith X1 Chinstrap

The Xenith X1 helmet introduced in 2009 uses a completely new and unique system for fitting the helmet. The Xenith does not have traditional air bladders that we fill using a helmet pump to secure a proper fit. The Xenith's 'shock bonnet' is sucked down onto the athlete's head to form a proper fit through the chinstrap system. It is very important that the chinstrap is properly installed and tightened to ensure that a secure fit is attained.

While doing helmet checks at this year's Senior Bowl, a Xenith helmet was found where the two straps had been reversed. The upper strap had been moved to fit the lower chinstrap snaps. By doing this, this particular strap would not stay attached to the chin cup, and to keep them from unsnapping from the chin cup they had to be taped onto it. The player also cut the straps so that there

wouldn't be any excess. The lower straps, which control the tightening, and therefore fit, of the helmet had been changed to attach to the upper chinstrap. Reversing the straps took away all the tightening ability of the chinstrap and therefore the helmet was loose and therefore not protecting the player as it should. The cut straps would then not fit the upper snaps and had to be replaced. Once the new straps were installed on the helmet, the player was properly fitted in his helmet, and said for the first time that he felt that his helmet actually fit him. It is very important that if you are using this helmet for your program, that the straps are properly installed and tightened to ensure the proper fit and safety of the athletes. For more information and instructional videos on replacing Xenith straps and on fitting the Xenith visit www.xenith.com.

The End of Interchangeable Helmet Parts

Gone are the days where helmet parts are interchangeable between manufacturers or even different helmets by the same manufacturer. As with the Riddell Quick Release Face Guard System, over the past 7 years with the different types of helmets coming onto the market, each are now coming out with their own specialized components. Components of the 'traditional-style' Riddell VSR-4 and Schutt Pro-Air helmets were interchangeable, including face masks, face mask clips, and jaw pads. But with today's helmets, this is no longer the case. Although this adds to the costs to run a program, it is very important that the proper parts are stocked and used on a particular helmet. This is something to consider when deciding what type of helmets you are going to stock for your team. Having many different

types of helmets requires a larger stock of replacement parts that you have to purchase. Some parts are even size-specific for a certain type of helmet, so that is also something that has to be considered. Some problems that have been found recently at Football Alberta selection camps have been the use of 'traditional' jaw pads in a Schutt DNA helmet or using a 'traditional' face mask on a Schutt DNA helmet. Using parts that are not intended for a specific helmet affects the fit and level of protection for the athlete wearing that helmet, and could even cause or increase the severity of an injury. This is increasingly becoming a problem these days, with the majority of problems seen being 'traditional-style' parts being used in today's newer helmets.

Good luck to all of you this season and please remember to e-mail any questions, requests, comments, concerns or suggestions to insidetheequipmentroom@hotmail.com, and we will address them in future issues. Also, please send an e-mail to the above address and we will add you to our mailing list to receive future issues of this newsletter.

Please watch for information following the 2010 season on upcoming Football Canada Equipment Fitting and Maintenance Clinics sponsored by Football Alberta.