Documentary tells story of football player’s mental illness, possible link to CTE

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The NFL is dealing with how to make the game of football safer for current players after the studies on former players revealed chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and brain damage.

CTE is a disease that deteriorates the brain after repeated head injuries. The association of such a serious issue with football, especially the NFL, has raised questions about whether or not the sport is too violent.

Netflix’s recent documentary, “Killer Inside: The Mind of Aaron Hernandez” tells the story of the former New England Patriots tight end who was charged with the murder of a man and suspected of many other crimes.

The documentary contains many causes that led up to these events, and at times it downplays the role CTE played in his obviously damaged mental state. Hernandez was from Bristol, Connecticut, and getting drafted by the New England Patriots kept him close to a questionable home. A stark detail that Netflix put in the documentary was that Hernandez had asked to be traded from the organization when he knew his actions were beginning to have consequences, but famous head coach Bill Belichick denied his request.

The documentary attempts to leave a lot about why he committed the crime open to interpretation.

They explain how his home life was questionable, he often had issues with his sexuality and he grew up as a star football player who thought there would be no repercussions for his actions.

At the end of the documentary, after Hernandez died by suicide in jail four years into his life sentence for murder, researchers studied his brain and saw major cases of CTE and brain damage.

Following a summation of the hits that Hernandez took in the NFL, the documentary leaves the viewer with the message that football may have played a major part in his deteriorated mental state.

However, other former professional football players interviewed during the documentary dispute the claim that CTE was the sole reason that Hernandez was mentally ill. Many NFL players deal with concussions due to the violent nature of the sport, but Hernandez was a special case as a murderer.

Research into a possible link between brain trauma and repeated head injuries in a sport like football will proceed, and the NFL will continue to discuss making the game safer, but Hernandez’s story is a case that will be examined for years.