



Letter to Editor

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Stop playing football in lightning: An urgent issue

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Dear Editor,

A bolt of lightning hits occurs when there are electrical imbalances between storm clouds and the ground, or within the clouds themselves. The majority of lightning strikes inside clouds ^[1]. However, this lightning is a natural phenomenon that occurs when lightning strikes the earth. Lightning strike, one of the most severe convective natural events, occurs suddenly almost everywhere on the earth's surface. Around the world, more than 1600–2400 thunderstorms occur at any given time, with 50,000 occurring per day ^[2,3].

When someone is hit by lightning, they become part of the main lightning discharge channel. Victims that are in open areas are more likely to be struck directly ^[4]. As a result, the direct hit has become more lethal. So, people should be careful of playing football during heavy storms because the open area is susceptible to very dangerous lightning strikes. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, at least 2,000 people have died in lightning strikes in India every year since 2005 ^[5]. Every day, many people died as a result of the sudden lightning strike around the world. In the year 2020, a football player was killed by lightning while playing a game at a village playground in Jharkhand's Gumla district, about 120 kilometers from the state capital Ranchi, India ^[6]. In the year before, a bolt of lightning hit former Santosh Trophy player Abhijit Ganguli and two other football players during a regular practice session at the Birsa Munda Stadium on Saturday, killing Ganguli and injuring two others ^[7]. Similarly, in the year 2020, two teenage Bangladesh cricketers were killed when they were struck by lightning. Officials identified the cricketers as Mohammad Nadim and Mizanur Rahman, who were playing football at a stadium in Gazipur outside of Dhaka when the tragedy occurred. Meanwhile lightning starts to strike, it stopped their cricket training and the cricketers began playing football in the meantime ^[8]. Subsequently, one possible implication is that football is mostly played outdoors, and children choose to play football because it is so appealing in the rain, but no one knows what the outcome would be. The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has rules about lightning, and the football referee has the authority to stop the game immediately if the weather conditions are unfavorable. However, most unofficial matches and practices are not supervised by any authority, so it is dangerous for children and adults to play football outdoors during a storm.

For all counts and based on scientific evidence, it's no surprise that children have died while playing football in lightning. Parental obligations and social awareness campaigns can be beneficial in preventing these unexpected deaths.

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