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Sports

Ciancaglini shows, not just tells

Former boxer talks concussion awareness at N. Rockland camp

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THIELS — There is no shortage of literature on the effects of untreated concussions.

In the past five years, countless studies have shown that playing before fully healing from one can lead to disastrous outcomes down the road.

But research can show only so much. Seeing the result of years of undiagnosed head trauma in person leaves a more lasting impression.

On Saturday, several local football teams taking part in the North Rockland Football Camp attended "The Second Impact," a concussion-awareness speech by Ray Ciancaglini, a former middleweight boxer who suffers from Parkinson's disease and dementia pugilistica due to untreated concussions.

"A lot of the kids, when you talk, it goes in one ear and

out the other," North Rockland football coach Tom Lynch said. "To meet this gentleman that's gone through this his whole life and is battling every day, they see what can happen, and you want to do the right thing for yourself."

Ciancaglini, 62, has made speeches around the state, all for free, about the importance of waiting for a head injury to completely heal before returning to play.

Ciancaglini was an up-and-coming boxer in the Finger Lakes region with a promising career ahead of him before multiple untreated concussions forced him to retire from the sport at 20.

All of Ciancaglini's problems can be traced to a mild concussion he suffered in a fight in Buffalo that he didn't get checked out by a doctor.

"One week later, I got my bell rung



Ray Ciancaglini, right, a former middleweight boxer, talks to Serge Benoit, left, and Justin Sapini of Spring Valley High School during the North Rockland Football Camp on Saturday. Ciancaglini is dealing with the effects of untreated concussions. JOHN MEORE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

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Ray Ciancaglini, a former middleweight boxer, talks to high school football players at the North Rockland High School football camp about second-impact syndrome and concussion awareness on Saturday. JOHN MEORE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

SHOW: Healing is important

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again and then things started to go downhill," Ciancaglini said. "I got the concussion on top of the unhealed concussion. It's like a bruise on top of a bruise."

North Rockland athletic trainer Carol Guzinski organized the event after hearing about Ciancaglini's speech at the New York State Athletic Trainers Association conference in Jamestown earlier

this month.

"Kids are getting better at being honest with me when they have symptoms, but the parents are still thinking, 'Oh they'll be fine, I played with it,'" Guzinski said. "The injury is completely different than we thought it was. They need to hear it from someone besides me to get it through."

Ciancaglini isn't trying to advocate against physical sports.

In fact, he said if he

could do it all over again he would still choose to box. The difference would be seeking medical attention for a concussion.

"That's the key to it all: letting it heal," Ciancaglini said. "I always tell them I endorse playing any sport. I think any sport you want to play you play the hardest you can play. But if you get your bell rung, you have to get it addressed properly."