In this look at the Big Ben motorcycle crash story, Papa Cass talks about athletes taking unneccessary risks with their bodies. Cassano comapres this situation with the Winslow wreck and ponders exactly what these players responsibilities to their respective teams is.

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Kellen Winslow Jr. and Ben Roethlisberger rode motorcycles for different reasons. The mutual interest, however, has landed them in the same place: on the operating table after horrific crashes.
Thirteen months ago, Winslow lost control of his bike during a stunt attempt in a Cleveland-area parking lot. He flipped over the handlebars and into a patch of small trees, tearing a knee ligament in the process. He missed the 2005 season.

Winslow was wearing a helmet, though the chinstrap reportedly wasn't buckled.

Roethlisberger was out for a ride on Pittsburgh-area streets Monday when he collided with a car, reportedly slamming his head against the windshield. He wasn't wearing a helmet, and sustained a broken jaw and nose, among other injuries.

There is no telling how long he'll be out.

It would seem that Winslow took the bigger risk of the two. He was trying to mimic stunt riders in an unsupervised environment. Roethlisberger was doing what thousands of people do around the country: taking his motorcycle out for a spin on a pleasant day.

But there is a not-so-fine line between Joe Blow taking his bike out for an afternoon joyride, and a franchise NFL player bombing down the street on a high-performance bike with no helmet.

Joe Blow crashes and misses work. Ben Roethlisberger crashes and puts the

Steelers' upcoming season in peril.

On the surface, Roethlisberger wasn't doing anything wrong. Pennsylvania has a lax helmet law, and away from football, Roethlisberger is just another citizen-driver. But just below the surface is a layer of personal responsibility that doesn't exist for private citizens. Some players have it built into their contracts, as Winslow did. Some don't. Regardless, it's always there as an unwritten rule, or should be.

It's part of the trade-off for making millions of dollars every year. You gain a life of luxury and six months off each year, but you lose some privacy and the right to do certain, risky things because it could hurt the team if you are injured or disabled.

Roethlisberger, as Winslow did, ignored prior warnings about the dangers of motorcycle riding. In this ESPN interview conducted last year in the aftermath of Winslow's accident, Roethlisberger attempts to justify why he rides motorcycles with no helmet. He says he is "the safest rider I can be." Even at that time, we knew those words were a load of mularkey.

No one except Roethlisberger knows whether he was oblivious to the danger, or felt invincible, or was simply able to justify the risk in his own mind. Just like Winslow, either Roethlisberger didn't know the level of risk he was assuming, or he didn't care. Either way, the answer is not good.
Now, because of unrepentant practice of a dangerous hobby, Roethlisberger faces months of rehab. Since he apparently did not sustain a major injury to an arm or leg, the odds of him being back at some point in 2006 are much higher than Winslow's were.

But this accident toys with the Steelers season far more than Winslow's accident did with the 2005 Browns. At the time of Winslow's accident, the Browns had just drafted Braylon Edwards, and had a deep enough receiver corps to buffer the loss of Winslow. There is no adequate replacement for Roethlisberger in Pittsburgh.

And, Clevelanders, let's try to resist the temptation to act smug. Yes, this is a potentially huge blow to the Steelers. But not one worth celebrating.