

Former Raiders to donate brains for CTE study

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Three former Oakland Raiders players are donating their brains to CTE research in honor of the late Kenny Stabler.

George Atkinson, George Buehler and Art Thoms told the San Jose Mercury News they have pledged their brains to the Boston-based Concussion Legacy Foundation. The foundation's mission is to elevate the understanding of the causes of

chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, the disease being linked to repeated blows to the head.

Stabler, who led the Raiders to their first championship in Super Bowl XI in his Hall of Fame career, died July 8 at age 69 from stage 4 colon cancer. His brain was sent to researchers in Boston and he was diagnosed with CTE by Dr. Ann McKee of the VA-BU-CLF Brain Bank, a collaboration between the Boston VA, Boston University, and the Con-

cussion Legacy Foundation.

The former Raiders made the decision to speak out together as a show of solidarity for their fallen friend.

"When you see your teammate deteriorate a lot through the end of his life, to see him go out like that, it brings us together," the 68-year-old Thoms, a defensive tackle who played for the Raiders from 1969-76, told the Mercury News. "You want to do something. You can donate money, but even more is to donate the

brain to help others in the future. I won't need it anymore once I'm gone."

Dr. McKee has found the disease in the brains of 90 of the 94 former NFL players she has examined, including Hall of Fame players Frank Gifford, Junior Seau and Mike Webster.

"I can't remember from yesterday to today half the time," said the 69-year-old Atkinson, an All-Pro safety for the Raiders from 1968-77. "I'd get in the middle of a piece and forget where I was going."

The 68-year-old Buehler, a Raiders offensive lineman from 1969-78, got tested by Boston physicians two days before Stabler died. Buehler told the newspaper the testing did not find the tau protein that is a strong indicator of CTE.

According to the New York Times this week, at least 100 diagnosed concussions were not reported by the NFL in data the league used to downplay effects of head injuries on players.

The league used the infor-

mation from the data between 1996 through 2001, the Times reported, knowing it didn't include information from multiple teams. For example, zero concussions were reported by the Dallas Cowboys, including multiple documented head injuries to Hall of Fame quarterback Troy Aikman.

The NFL issued a lengthy statement in response to the Times story, challenging the premise of the article and suggesting the newspaper "intentionally ignored the facts."



Connecticut Huskies head coach Geno Auriemma watches from the sideline Saturday during the second half against the Mississippi State Bulldogs in the semifinals of the Bridgeport regional of the women's NCAA Tournament at Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport, Connecticut. UConn defeated Mississippi State 98-38.

UConn

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"Well, it's funny, I just saw something about that and I think it's interesting when people say that," Stewart said. "If you look at our game (Saturday), yeah, there was a huge difference in the score, but the way that we were playing, we were executing everything

we needed to execute, and I know speaking for the players, we had a great time.

"I think that it's a mixture of both, because people say that women's basketball is boring to watch, but when we're playing at such a high level and because we're beating everyone else, then they don't want to watch it either. So I don't know what they want us to do about it."

The Huskies enter Sunday's contest with a 72-game

winning streak — the second longest in women's basketball history behind a 90-game streak the program put together from 2008-11

Texas is trying to advance to the Final Four for the first time since 2003 but nobody is giving the Longhorns the chance.

You see, Texas lost 105-54 to the Huskies in last season's Sweet 16 — and the 51-point margin was the Sweet 16 record until UConn's win over

Mississippi State on Saturday.

"Last year, I think they put the hammer on us because we gave up," Texas standout Imani Boyette said at a press conference. "We gave in when we kind of hit resistance. So I think we just figured out how to go through that wall, when you do — the other team goes on a run, you know how to respond, and you know how to stay within each other and not get down on yourselves."

Washington makes Final Four for first time

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Kelsey Plum scored 26 points to help Washington advance to the Final Four for the first time in school history with an 85-76 victory over Pac-12 rival Stanford in the regional final at Lexington, Kentucky, on Sunday.

Chantel Osahor added 24 points and 18 rebounds for the seventh-seeded Huskies (26-10). Talia Walton scored 12 points for Washington.

Lili Thompson scored 19 points for fourth-seeded Stanford (27-8). Erica McCall added 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Cardinal.

Washington will face Syracuse in a national semifinal on April 3 in Indianapolis.

The Huskies scored the game's first 12 points and never trailed. The Cardinal made 14 3-point baskets and moved within four points in the fourth quarter before Washington held off the charge.

Stanford's Karlise Samuelson scored 12 points on four 3-pointers. She made 14 of 23 shots from behind the arc during the NCAA Tournament.

Tennessee 89, Syracuse 67

Alexis Peterson poured in a season-best 29 points, and the Orange routed the Lady Vols to win the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, region and advance to the Final Four for the first time in school history.

Fourth-seeded Syracuse (29-7) also got 18 points from Brianna Butler and 13 from Cornelia Fondren.

Peterson finished 11-for-20 from the floor and added six assists and four rebounds. Fondren shot 6-for-6 and recorded three steals. Butler sank a game-high six 3-pointers (on 15 attempts).

The Orange shot better on 3-point attempts (14-for-30, 46.7 percent) than on 2-point attempts (18-for-39, 46.2 percent).

Seventh-seeded Tennessee hit just 39.3 percent of its field-goal attempts (24-for-61). Diamond DeShields paced the Lady Vols with 20 points and 10 rebounds. Jaime Nared added 14 points, nine boards and six assists, and Bashaara Graves scored 11 points.

UConn 98, Mississippi St. 38

Breanna Stewart led Connecticut with 22 points, 14 rebounds and five blocks as the No. 1 Huskies routed fifth-seeded Mississippi State 98-38 Saturday in a Bridgeport Regional semifinal.

UConn (35-0) won its 72nd consecutive game while Mississippi State ended its season at 28-8.

The 60-point win broke the record for

NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL



Washington Huskies guard Brianna Ruiz cuts down the net Sunday after the game against the Stanford Cardinal in the finals of the Lexington regional of the women's NCAA Tournament at Rupp Arena in Lexington, Kentucky. Washington defeated Stanford 85-76 and will play Syracuse in a Final Four semifinal on April 3 in Indianapolis.

the largest margin of victory in a regional semifinal or beyond. UConn beat Texas by 51 points a year ago — the former record.

Stewart, the two-time Associated Press player of the year, helped the Huskies take a 13-0 lead early on. UConn cruised from there. Katie Lou Samuelson scored 21 points for the Huskies and Morgan Tuck added 19. Teaira McCowan (10 points) was the only Bulldog who scored in double figures.

UConn will play Texas in the regional final Monday night.

Baylor 78, Florida State 58

Nina Davis scored 30 points and powered the top-seeded Bears into the Elite Eight for the third straight year in the Dallas Regional Saturday.

The Bears (36-1) went ahead to stay with a 15-3 run to end the first quarter after an early flurry of turnovers led to frustrated coach Kim Mulkey calling timeout.

Baylor then rolled to a 40-24 halftime lead

Alexis Jones added 15 points, nine rebounds and five assists for Baylor, which has a 23-game winning streak. Khadijah Cave had 10 rebounds.

Leticia Romero had 11 points for fifth-seeded Florida State (25-8), which made consecutive Sweet 16 appearances for the first time in school history. Ivey Slaugh-

ter, Shakayla Thomas and Brittany Brown each added 10 points.

Texas 72, UCLA 64

Imani Boyette had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the No. 2-seeded Longhorns in a Bridgeport Regional semifinal Saturday.

Texas trailed UCLA by six entering the fourth quarter but outscored the Bruins 24-10 to pull out the come-from-behind victory. Brooke McCarty scored 15 points for Texas (31-4).

No. 3 seed UCLA (26-9) was led by Monique Billings' 20 points and 12 rebounds. Jordin Canada also scored 20 points for the Bruins.

UCLA led at the end of each of the first three quarters, but Texas scored the first 10 points of the fourth and held on from there.

Oregon State 83, DePaul 71

Oregon State advanced to its first women's regional final behind Jamie Weisner's 38 points, seven 3-pointers and 10 rebounds against DePaul in Dallas Saturday.

The second-seeded Beavers (31-4), who won the Pac-12 title, face top-seeded Baylor (36-1) on Monday night for a spot in the Final Four.

Sydney Wiese and Ruth Hamblin each had 13 points for Oregon State.

Tourney

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Villanova 64, Kansas 59

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky — Unable to carve up Kansas with its precise half-court offense, Villanova instead turned to its defense as the avenue to reach the Final Four.

Forcing 16 turnovers, the next-to-last one ruining the Jayhawks' final chance to tie, the Wildcats knocked off the South Regional top seed 64-59 on Saturday night at KFC Yum! Center to attain their first national semifinal in seven years.

Up by three points after forward Kris Jenkins knocked down two free throws with just over 13 seconds left, No. 2 Villanova denied Kansas a last shot. Backup forward Mikal Bridges swiped the ball from guard Frank Mason and the Wildcats called timeout with 4.6 seconds left to save possession.

Guard Jalen Brunson iced the result with two free throws with 3.5 seconds remaining as Villanova (33-5) moved on to a matchup with West Regional champion Oklahoma next Saturday night in Houston.

Jenkins, guard Ryan Arcidiacono and guard Josh Hart each scored 13 points and forward Daniel Ochefu added 10 for the Wildcats.

Guard Devonte' Graham had a game-high 17 points for the Jayhawks (33-5) and guards Wayne Selden and Frank Mason hit for 16 each. But forward Perry Ellis, who averaged 23 points per game in Kansas' three previous NCAA Tournament games, managed only four points on 1-of-5 shooting from the field.

The first half was marked by predictable offensive struggles as both teams tried to figure out the best defense either had seen to this point in the tournament.

Playing at a cautious pace, Kansas inched out to a 16-12 lead with 10:41 left as Selden slalomed through the defense for a driving layup. But the Jayhawks wouldn't score again for nearly seven minutes as Villanova's zone defense forced a spate of turnovers and missed 3-pointers.

Ochefu's dunk capped a

run of 13 straight points and gave the Wildcats a 25-16 lead with 4:09 left. Kansas crawled within 29-25 after Graham made a 3-pointer in the last 30 seconds. However, after taking its first-half timeout to set up a final shot, Villanova cashed in on a 3-pointer from the right wing by Jenkins for a 32-25 advantage at halftime.

Oklahoma 80, Oregon 68

ANAHEIM, California — Oklahoma guard Buddy Hield scored 37 points and tied a career high with eight 3-pointers as the No. 7 Sooners advanced to the Final Four with an 80-68 victory over top-seeded Oregon in the NCAA West Regional at the Honda Center on Saturday.

Hield, the two-time Big 12 Player of the Year, had 17 points in the first half, when the Sooners (29-7) built an 18-point lead. Oregon never got within 12 until the final half-minute.

Hield has 117 points in four NCAA tournament games to help Oklahoma advance to its fifth Final Four. Hield was second in NCAA power five conferences with a 25.1 scoring average entering the game.

Forward Dillon Brooks, Oregon's leading scorer at 17.0 points a game, had seven points on 3-of-6 shooting from the floor before fouling out in the final two minutes.

Forward Elgin Cook had 24 points for No. 5 Oregon (31-7), which had a 10-game winning streak broken. Forward Chris Boucher had 14 points.

The Sooners will meet the Villanova next Saturday in Houston.

Oklahoma, which was averaging 10.43-pointers a game, was 12-of-24 from 3-point range. The Sooners have made 42.8 percent of their 3-point shots this season, on pace for a school record.

The Sooners had a 38-32 rebounding advantage and turned 14 offensive rebounds into 16 second chance points.

Oregon played a 1-2-2 three-quarter court gentle zone press in the first half designed to slow Oklahoma, but the Sooners were not fazed.

Hield had 17 points and five 3-pointers in the first half, when the Sooners took a 48-30 lead on Hield's 3-pointer with five seconds remaining, their largest lead of the opening 20 minutes.

Ravens among hundreds to mourn Tray Walker

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Members of the Baltimore Ravens were among the hundreds to mourn the death of cornerback Tray Walker on the day of his funeral.

Walker died March 18 from injuries sustained in a dirt bike accident in Liberty City, Florida. He was 23.

Approximately 45 Ravens' coaches, executives and players were in attendance Saturday for Walker's funeral in his hometown of Miami.

Among those representing the Ravens' organization were head coach John Harbaugh, general manager Ozzie Newsome, wide receiver Steve Smith, receiver Kamar Aiken, defensive lineman Timmy Jernigan, cornerback Jimmy Smith and safety Matt Elam.

The Ravens entered Community Baptist Church together with Walker's family.

Harbaugh was one of nine people to eulogize Walker.

"A year ago, we had a pre-draft meeting, and we brought Tray in to find out what he was all about before we drafted him," Harbaugh said at the funeral. "He sat in my office, right across the table, looking me in the eye. The first thing I noticed was that smile — that big Tray Walker smile."

"I said, 'Tray, what's the most important thing, what's your No. 1 motivation?' And

he said, 'I want to take care of my mom. I love her, and I appreciate everything she has done for me.'"

Harbaugh concluded by saying, "Tray Walker, we love you, and we're going to miss you."

Walker, a 2015 fourth-round draft pick, played in eight games for the Ravens last season, mostly on special teams.

Walker, who played college football at Texas Southern, dedicated his rookie NFL season to his father, Tommy Walker, who died of a heart attack in 2014. The family spread the ashes of Walker's father off the coast of Miami one day after Walker was drafted — on his father's birthday.

Minnesota Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater, who played with Walker at Miami's Northwestern High School, was among the other players at the funeral.

Bridgewater told ESPN afterward that he will always remember the "great memories" he had with Walker and how much football meant to him.

"His NFL career had just begun," Bridgewater told ESPN. "He had tremendous upside, size, everything that you look for in a defensive back. Football was an outlet for us, so when he was out there on that field, football was a vacation for him."