

Mr. George Martin

Executive Director, NFL Alumni Association

Congressional Hearing II

Chairmen Conyers,

This marks the second such illustrious occasion in which key, high profile notable dignitaries from all facets of the sporting world have been summoned and assembled in order to provide valuable testimony toward this growing and mounting health issue in sports. I, myself, am once again honored to lend both my personal experiences as well as sharing real-life events that have sharply added to this mounting debate. By my presence here today, it is my sincere hope that we can move closer to identifying the scope of existing problems in all sports, effectively preventing any such future medical occurrences and most importantly identifying and implementing meaningful and practical solutions for those that have been adversely impacted going forward.

**As a Former Professional Athlete:** I wish to reiterate once again for the record, that my unique perspective lends valuable credence to the overall severity of this potentially tragic and devastating situation. As a seasoned veteran of the National Football League for 14 improbable years as a defensive end, I have brutally toiled in the very trenches of NFL warfare, delivering, as well as being the recipient of countless acts of physical deprivation. I will also add that 14 NFL seasons of yester-year, from 1975-1988, would actually calculate into more the 1 full year, more than 365 full and complete days of unimaginable physicality. Realizing that what was then, Two-a-Day, and sometimes 3 "FULL CONTACT" practice sessions per day, often times without the benefit of a single drop of water would today constitute the very definition of insanity.

It is extremely noteworthy, that the standard nomenclature of this bygone era must be properly translated for the unsuspecting public, in order to fully appreciate the magnitude or more importantly the severity of these universally accepted situations. Conversely, it would represent the height of naivety on my part for me to believe that I could ever adequately replicate the overall scope of afflictions that occurred during this era to you the audience in the allotted timeframe.

Never the less, the terms of combative engagement drills such as "one on one, three on three, five on five and seven on seven," are representative events and practice segments that were devised to barbarically separate, as was popular in its day, "The Men from the boys". This daily activity represented the epitome of physical combat or thence warfare during the course of an entire NFL season, and was particularly highlighted and emphatically implemented during NFL Training Camps".

Additionally industry terms such as "Bull in the Ring", as well as the infamous "Nut-Cracker" drills are certainly not references to a Spanish tradition of domestic cows running down the streets of Spain, nor Holiday Ballet performances at Lincoln Centre. These signify a physical tariff, measured in bloody noses and extremities, persistent headaches, broken bones, and mangled limbs. Yes, these were immediate prices of sacrifice that I, and far too many of my comrades paid in order to become modern day

gladiators of the NFL, and I might add that the resulting injurious impacts were merely exacerbated on Sunday afternoons. Now, unfortunately, a shocking reckoning is occurring at an alarming rate among NFL Alumnus, and thankfully the world is finally taking notice.

**As a Former NFL Player Representative for 12 years:** It quickly became evident to me that far too many of our predecessors were falling victim to the same sense of invincibility that we were foolishly exhibiting early on in our respective careers. However, as an NFL player rep, you cannot ignore the constant clamor for assistance in hearing grievances, while filing for, and pursuing necessary post-career benefits. Little did we realize that their prophetic predictions and eventual medical destination, would represent an eerily identical foreshowing of our own futures. “Youth, as they say is after all, wasted on the young”

The progressive need for continuous medical attention, diagnosis and eventually treatment for former professional athletes reads like a contiguous sequential almanac. The overall situation is, to coin a phrase “Complicated”. It’s predictable though not preventable, treatable but not easily identifiable, pervasive but as yet, undetermined. So it was said, “That more studies needs to be done”. Little did any of us realize it then, that with the passage of time, some of us would pay an even greater physical tariff for our youthful indiscretions.

**As a former President of the National Football League Players Association:** With longevity often times comes wisdom. Witnessing the deteriorating plight of pre 1959 NFL alumnus, gave rise to a sense of fraternal obligation, and thus a collective approval was consented by players to include those warriors of the past into a more progressive and updated pension benefit package by the NFLPA. At that time, it was simply an act of responsibility and good stewardship on the part of us, as then, active players. None of us in retrospect to this day, have any regrets for making that initiative an intricate and a marquee demand of our collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Perhaps we realized that eventually the fortunes would be reversed, and we would sincerely hope that “History would once again repeat itself”, and that a similar act of fraternal respect and obligation would be enacted on behalf of NFL Alumni by our successors. It remains a desire that is as yet, unfulfilled. As representative of such senior alumnus, it is our hope that this congressional action will have that desired effect.

**Today, As Executive Director of The NFL Alumni Association and Representative of Retired NFL Players**

As one who represents the vast and diverse constituency of NFL Alumni, I want to personally and wholeheartedly commend Congressmen Conyers and this distinguished assembly on its noble pursuits. Obviously there has been careful and concise consideration to the widely diverse representatives who have been called upon to bear witness to the state of affairs regarding this issue. As you are aware the 2008 University of Michigan study commissioned by the NFL illuminated physical ailments currently suffered by my constituents. As Executive Director of the NFL Alumni Association I will lead the effort to work collaboratively with the league in an effort utilize the data obtained from the Michigan study to assist my constituents in need. Since being established 90 years ago, 21,000 men have played in the National Football League. Ladies and Gentlemen, I will not rest until every surviving retired player and their families are aware of the many medical and financial programs already available to retirees. I will not rest until assistance is given to each and every retired player in need.

I myself am acutely aware of the necessary due diligence that is of vital requisite to derive workable solutions, however, I would humbly and respectfully add the following indelible element to our ongoing equation, and that is simply EXPEDIENCY.

Expedience with-out sacrifice. For I represent a segment of NFL Alumnus whose hour glass of hope diminishes with each passing day, and their optimism is fading as their patience has worn thin with the passage of time. Their contributions and recognitions to the success of the industry, should not be cloaked in posthumous accolades, but rather extolled proudly, publically and prominently while they still live.

