

Concussions Lawsuit: Judge Orders NFL, Retired Players To Negotiate

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The NFL and former players must try to negotiate a dispute over whether complaints about concussion-related injuries belong in court or in arbitration, a federal judge said Monday.

U.S. District Judge Anita B. Brody of Philadelphia had planned to rule July 22 in a legal fight that involves about 4,200 former players and could be worth billions of dollars.

But instead she ordered the two sides to begin mediation with retired federal Judge Layn Phillips. The retirees want the right to sue the league, while the NFL insists the claims must be arbitrated under terms of the collective bargaining agreement.

Brody asked for a progress re-

port by Sept. 3, while placing a gag order on the lawyers. Both sides agreed to comply.

Many former players say they suffer from dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other neurological conditions, which they believe stem from on-field concussions. The league insists that safety has always been a top priority.

Both sides have something to fear from a court ruling. Brody could throw out the lawsuits and steer them to arbitration; or accept some or all of them, and open up internal NFL files to plaintiffs' lawyers looking for a smoking gun. Still, sports law professor Marc Edelman, who teaches at Fordham University and Baruch College, called it "highly unlikely" that either side would budge during mediation.

"The sentimental impact of this type of case is one that would make it strongly advantageous for the plaintiffs to get to a jury," Edelman said. "The position the NFL has taken is they are not liable for anything that's happened to the players."

In legal arguments before Brody in April, NFL lawyer Paul Clement said teams bear the chief responsibility for health and safety under the contract, along with the players' union and the players themselves. Players' lawyer David Frederick accused the league of concealing studies linking concussions to neurological problems for decades.

"The plaintiffs got in a lot of their case, that the NFL glorified violence all these years. I would think in mediation that Judge Phillips would let it go further, if that's what they want

to talk about," said Andrew Brandt, who directs a sports law center at Villanova University School of Law.

In recent years, a string of former NFL players and other concussed athletes have been diagnosed after their deaths with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, including popular Pro Bowler Junior Seau and lead plaintiff Ray Easterling. Both committed suicide last year.

About one-third of the league's 12,000 former players have joined the litigation since 2011. Some legal experts feel the NFL may be most vulnerable on claims from a few hundred "gap" players, who played during years when there was no contract in place.

"We respect and will comply with the court's order regarding me-

diation and will be available to meet with Judge Phillips at his direction," NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said in a statement. The Plaintiffs' Executive Committee for the former NFL players also pledged to "follow the court's directive."

Phillips, 61, had a meteoric law career before leaving the federal bench in Oklahoma and moving to private practice before age 40. He was a tennis standout at the University of Tulsa, where he also played flag football, according to an online biography. He is now based in Newport Beach, Calif.

"Judge Phillips is pleased to have been appointed ... in this challenging and complex matter. He looks forward to working with the parties to achieve resolution," his office said in a statement.

Iowa State's Young Guards Seek Playing Time In '13-14

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Iowa State's hopes for a third straight trip to the NCAA tournament next season rest largely on how it overcomes the loss of guards Korie Lucious, Chris Babb and Tyrus McGee.

A major part of Iowa State coach Fred Hoiberg's plan to replace his starting backcourt is to lean on transfers — again. The Cyclones, however, have young guards who are eager to show Hoiberg he already has a solution on hand.

Hoiberg brought in former Marshall star DeAndre Kane and junior college standout K.J. Bluford. The expectation is that both will immediately compete for significant minutes.

But the Cyclones have four underclassmen guards: Naz Long, Sherron Dorsey-Walker, Matt Thomas and Monte Morris, and a veteran backup in Bubu Palo. And none of them is planning to spend the season on the bench.

"We're just going to see how the chips fall," Morris said.

Dorsey-Walker and Long should have a head start on Thomas and Morris since they've been on campus for more than a year.

But both still have a lot to prove after a forgettable first season in Ames.

Dorsey-Walker, a Detroit product with offers from schools such as Indiana, Michigan and Baylor, red-shirted last season.

Long played in 18 games last season, averaging just 1.4 points. Long was largely forgotten once Palo returned after a sexual assault charge against him was dropped by prosecutors in January.

Long knows he needs to work on his decision-making, which was spotty at times when he was pressed into play.

"Being a freshman, I was just young," Long said before a summer league game in West Des Moines, Iowa, with fellow college players from the area.

Hoiberg "said just to take what I got and just build on everything I got and get better in all areas."

Dorsey-Walker and Long will have to show significant improvement since they'll be pushed right away by Thomas and Morris — the most highly touted prep backcourt duo Hoiberg has recruited.

Thomas, a consensus top-60 recruit from Onalaska High (Wis.), is considered one of the best young shooting guards in his class. Thomas averaged nearly 30 points a game as a senior, and Morris called him a "Kyle Korver-type shooter" from the 3-point line.

Morris, a three-time All-State pick and Michigan's Mr. Basketball in 2013, could end up being the true young point guard that Hoiberg has never had.

It's tough to imagine Morris beating out Kane, who averaged 15.1 points and, more importantly, seven assists a game at Marshall last season. But Morris believes he and Kane could see significant minutes because of their versatility.

Kane "can play all five positions. He's 6-foot-4. He's not just a point guard. He plays great off the ball, too, and he can post up," Morris said. "I can run (on) the wing too, with me and him playing at the same time. With him being a senior, I know we need that senior leadership, and it's going to help us in the long run."

Don't count out Palo in the

Baseball

Lakers Host Brandon Valley



ABOVE: Yankton Lakers third baseman Nate Stephenson, left, runs down Brandon Valley's Wilson Kolbeck for an out during the opening game of their VFW Teener baseball doubleheader on Monday at Yankton's Riverside Field.

RIGHT: Yankton Lakers second baseman Drew Wenande camps in front of a ground ball during the opening game of the Lakers' VFW Teener baseball doubleheader with Brandon Valley on Monday. Results from the doubleheader were not reported by press time Monday night.

PHOTOS BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Amateurs: Sees Guides Irene Past Scotland 15-0

IRENE — Irene's George Sees helped his own cause with two hits, including a home run, and six RBI in a 15-0 victory over Scotland in South Central League amateur baseball action on Sunday night.

The game was delayed by rain for an hour and 20 minutes.

Matt Sees added a double for Irene, which took ad-

vantage of a wild Scotland pitching staff and recorded just six hits.

Casey Comstock doubled for Scotland.

also

■ Photos From Monday's Lakers-BV Game Can Be Viewed At: **spotted.yankton.net**

Sees struck out five and allowed just two hits in the five-inning contest. Bryan Fuks took the loss.

Irene, 10-5, hosts Akron, Iowa, on Tuesday in a non-league matchup. Scotland hosts Freeman on Thursday.

SCOTLAND	000 00 - 0 2 3
IRENE	310 47 - 15 6 0

Bryan Fuks, Jared Kloucek (3), Dalton Mogck (5) and Casey Comstock; George Sees and Josh Wenande



New League Facing Bowl Challenges After Playoff Format Changes

BY MATT MURSCHER

(c) 2013 The Orlando Sentinel (Orlando, Fla.)

The University of Central Florida's decision to join the Big East back in 2011 was predicated, in part, on the fact it would be granted a new level of access to postseason contests.

However, the Big East crumbled as a football conference. Its replacement, the new American Athletic Conference, lost considerable stature.

The Power 5 conferences — SEC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and ACC — have emerged as key leaders under the new playoff postseason format set to debut in 2014. Those leagues aggressively worked to protect their new status, preferring to play each other in bowl games rather than risk losing to a team from a non-Power 5 conference.

The moves have left some in the American anxious about their postseason options.

"You've read in the papers and all and heard about them wanting to play each other and that has happened at certain levels of the bowl system,"

American commissioner Mike Aresco told the Orlando Sentinel. "Certainly there are opportunities we maybe not be getting. We're concerned about some of that, but those conferences will be playing us in bowl games."

"We view ourselves as much closer to the five conferences, the so-called 'Power 5.'"

While the American is still finding its footing in college football's new landscape, Conference USA, Mid-American, Mountain West and Sun Belt leaders had far less access than the defunct Big East and don't appear to be frustrated by the shift in postseason opportunities.

"I don't sense any of that," said Sun Belt commissioner Karl Benson of the new bowl system. "It's not going to be a whole lot different than what's already been in place."

Mid-American Conference commissioner Jon Steinbrecher added, "There's not frustration out of this office. I'm not seeing much of a big change."

Among the 70 bowl games currently

"We had several occasions where we had really, really good teams that did not get opportunities for postseason play."

JON STEINBRECHER

on the schedule, 23 have arrangements with the five smaller conferences. Several bowls are offering backup spots if their Power 5 conferences partners can't field enough bowl eligible teams to fulfill their agreement.

In 2012, there were 28 teams outside of the Power 5 that played in bowl games. While they may not have direct bowl contracts, close to the same number of non-Power 5 teams are expected to earn postseason invitations under the new bowl system.

That's a major step forward, according to Steinbrecher.

"You go back 10 years or 12 years ago and the Mid-American Conference maybe had one bowl opportunity,"

Steinbrecher said. "We had several occasions where we had really, really good teams that did not get opportunities for postseason play."

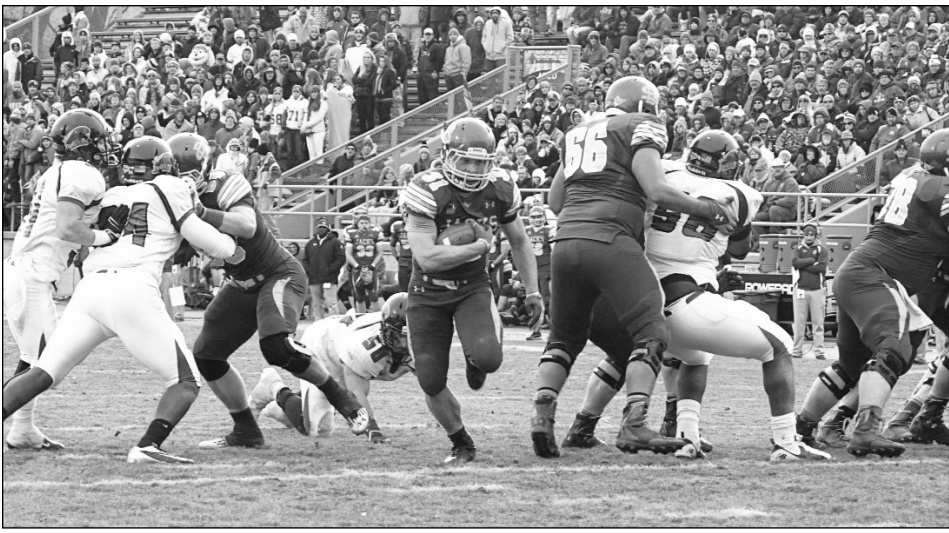
In fact, the MAC had a record seven teams qualify for and play in bowl games last season.

Steinbrecher credits the creation of the Bowl Championship Series for injecting more revenue and better bowl opportunities for the MAC.

Both Steinbrecher and Benson said the new College Football Playoff will provide even more opportunities for conferences while giving the leagues a big financial boost.

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Jacks' Zenner Named To Walter Payton Award Watch List



P&D FILE PHOTO

South Dakota State running back Zach Zenner, center, runs for a first down in last fall's FCS playoff game in Brookings. Zenner was named Monday to the 2013 Walter Payton Award List for the top offensive player in the country.

PHILADELPHIA — South Dakota State University running back Zach Zenner is one of 20 players named to the initial 2013 Walter Payton Award Watch List for the top offensive player in the Football Championship Subdivision.

A junior from Egan, Minn., Zenner is one of 11 finalists from the 2012 season to appear on the official watch list, which was announced Monday morning. A consensus All-America selection last season, Zenner placed seventh in the balloting after joining the watch list a month into the 2012 campaign.

Zenner led the nation in rushing during the 2012 season, racking up 2,044 yards in 13 games for an average of 157.2 yards per contest. He crossed the 100-yard mark in nine games and topped 200 yards three times, including a school-record 295 yards in the opening round of the FCS playoffs Nov. 24 versus Eastern Illinois. Zenner averaged 6.8 yards per carry and scored 13 touchdowns on the ground, while adding 28 receptions for 197 yards.

Three other players from the Missouri Valley Football Conference were named to the Payton Award Watch List. They include Shakir Bell (RB, Indiana State), Brock Jensen (QB, North Dakota State) and David Johnson (RB, Northern Iowa).

The Walter Payton Award will be presented by The Sports Network on Dec. 16.