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Bohls: Ploetz's widow files wrongful death suit against NCAA over CTE

SPORTS By Kirk Bohls - American-Statesman Staff



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Handout photo of the University of Texas football team, circa 1969. Back, row 7, left to right: (#82) Tommy Woodard, (87) Jerrell Bolton, (11) Wayne Kirk, (77) Bill Atessis, (50) Bobby Wuensch, (75) Charles Crawford, (79) Tommy Matula, (60) "Syd" Sydney J. Keasler III, (57) Jim Achilles, (47) Paul Robichau, (10) Robbie Patman, (15) Bill Catlett, (15) Allshouse. Row 6, left to right: (26) Johnny Robinson, (61) Scott Henderson, (81) Hutson, (25) Donny Windham, (27) Tommy Asaff, (58) Buddy Hudgins, (92) Forrest Wiegand, (67) Glen Halsell, (43) Larry Webb, (39) Sam Lawless, (53) George McIngvale, (2) Jack Rushing, (36) David Ballew, Mgr. Kay. Row 5, left to right: Mgr. Fox, (42) Mack McKinney, (17) Gary Rike, (72) Jim Williamson, (71) Leo Brooks, (62) Bob McKay, (80) Bill Zapalac, (65) Scott Palmer, (70) Carl White, (88) Charles Speyrer, (78) Tommy Lee, (37) Rob Layne, (23) Danny Lester, Trainer Pippin. Row 4, left to right: Mgr. Cave, (81) — Anders, (48) Rick Troberman, (55) Braband, (49) Bob Huffman, (54) Rick Martin, (46) Bobby Callison, (38) Jimmy Hull, (79) Pat Macha, (35) Jim Bertelsen, (85) Stan Mauldin, (29) Robert Paine, (41) Rick Nabors, (5) Happy Feller, Trainer Baldwin. Row 3, left to right: Mgr. Cook, (56) Mike Speer, (51) Jeff Zapalac, (73) Travis Roach, (74) Randy Stout, (21) Dickie Johnston, (14) Eddie Phillips, (45) Ken Ehrig, (40) Randy Peschel, (16) James Street, (28) Fred Steinmark, (34) David Richardson, (19) Paul Kristynik, (12) Dan Terwalp, (90) Adger, Mgr. Simpson. Row 2, left to right: Mgr. Hobbs, (13) Jimmy Gunn, (63) George Cobb, (89) David Arledge, (32) Mike Hutchings, (86) Mike Campbell, (76) Chris Young, (68) Jay Cormier, (66) Mike Dean, (64) Bobby Mitchell, (31) Greg Ploetz, (55) Ronnie Tyler, (10) David Keeton, (20) Scotter Monzingo, Mgr. Hall. Row 1, left to right: Mgr. Lemmon, (17) D. Campbell, (18) Donnie Wigginton, (53) Rob Schultz, (44) Raymond Fontenot, (22) Billy Dale, (30) Steve Worster, (24) Ted Koy, (84) Tom Campbell, (59)

Posted: 5:52 p.m. Tuesday, January 24, 2017

While I got ya, here are nine things and one crazy prediction:

1. Greg Ploetz's widow, Deb, is taking action. Her husband was one of the great Longhorns players without the name recognition of a Nobis or a Campbell — a fiery, undersized, 5-11, 210-pound defensive tackle on Texas' 1969 national championship team and the Southwest Conference defensive player of the year in 1971. But he might become an even more important figure. He was one of at least four ex-Longhorns from that era, including tight end Julius Whittier, the first black letterman at Texas, who suffered cognitive decline and perhaps CTE, said teammate Billy Dale. "It was a depressing experience for me to see a frame of mind start to go through the ordeal that Greg did," Dale said. "It was so sad. One thing I learned was how much impact it has on the families, and I admire all of them for that." Last week Deb filed a wrongful death lawsuit blaming Greg's 2015 death at age 66 on inattentive NCAA

guidelines concerning head trauma. Ploetz was later diagnosed with Stage 4 CTE. The suit alleges the NCAA knew or should have known about the inherent risks of so many impacts to the head, but doesn't specify damages. Texas is not named as a defendant. His symptoms did not begin until 2005, 33 years after his playing career. Ploetz's brain was donated to the Concussion Legacy Foundation at Boston University.

2. The price of Super Bowl tickets is going down. Relatively speaking. When the Dallas Cowboys lost to Green Bay, ticket prices dropped an average of 18 percent to a median price of \$4,890. It went back up, but Shannon McKinley of Ticket City says the price fell Tuesday morning to \$5,208 from \$5,650. Maybe Pats fans are bored by winning so much. McKinley said 46 percent of Ticket City's buyers are from Houston, 15 percent from the New England area and only 9 percent from Atlanta. The remaining 30 percent comes from Miami, Los Angeles and Mexico. No wonder Roger Goodell is playing games in Mexico City.

3. Angels reliever Huston Street further endeared himself to Austin when he and wife Lacey generously donated \$1 million to RBI Austin at its annual banquet Thursday. The RBI benefit also raised \$346,000 for inner-city baseball kids.

4. Augie Garrido was recognized at the banquet as the winningest coach in college baseball history. He won the first of his five College World Series championships with Cal State Fullerton in 1975 and finished his career at Texas last May with 1,975 wins. "Pretty cool, huh?" he noted. When I asked him his favorite UT players ever, he mentioned Street and third baseman Omar Quintanilla, which reminded him of a funny moment when his Longhorns lost to Texas A&M to cost Texas at least a share of the 2003 Big 12 championship. "I was in the coach's office with my head in my hands, feeling sorry for myself," said Augie, who has dropped 40 pounds and looks fit. "Omar poked his head in and said, 'Coach, you OK, man? I said 'Suicide doesn't sound like too bad an idea right now,' and Omar said, 'Can I have your Porsche?' Teamwork was over. It was every man for himself." His good friend, Kevin Costner, reminded Augie to tell the audience "that you were proud of be the coach at a school you didn't have the grades to attend."

5. The Texas women's swim team has reached No. 1 for the first time under fifth-year head coach Carol Capitani. Texas is the only team in the nation with at least one swimmer ranked among the top 16 nationally in every event, including 10-time All-American Madisyn Cox and senior Tasija Karosas of Vermont who owns the 100 backstroke school record.

6. The fences at Disch-Falk Field have been brought in. New baseball coach David Pierce said a recent batting practice produced a lot of smiles. "They're giving me a lot of hugs." A lot of long balls, too.

7. Brandon Belt's coming off his best year as a pro, and the former Longhorns first baseman hopes to build on his 17-homer, 82-RBI year with San Francisco. He played in 156 of the 162 games. "Strictly by the numbers, I feel it was my best year," Belt said. "Now I want to take the next step." He knows there's been some talk of using catcher Buster Posey at first base to relieve him from catching duties occasionally. "He does so good at catcher; it'd be a disservice not to have him in the lineup. He won a Gold Glove. But every now and then, you need a break, and I can go to the outfield." Belt wore one of his two World Series title rings, the one from 2014 "because it's got a little more bling."

8. NCAA golf just changed its substitution policy, albeit a year too late, and John Fields is totally on board. The NCAA Division I men's golf committee announced substitutions for any reason will now be allowed during the match-play portion of the NCAA Championship, but not during the four rounds of stroke play. Texas was victimized by the policy last year when a shoulder injury prevented Haskins Award winner Beau Hossler from competing against Oregon, and Texas had to concede a point without a club being swung. Fields, who was selected as the 2017 Palmer Cup head coach for the U.S. team recently, told me, "I was not in favor of it at first blush, due to scholarship limitations and easily attainable academic aid that is available to some schools, but not all (creating an unlevel playing field). With the Golf Channel and viewing public strongly in favor of the change, the rationale is supported. In short, I love it." I'd suggest the NCAA allow substitution for all rounds.

9. Loved Oscar nominee "Hidden Figures," a superbly written, true story of three African-American female mathematicians who overcame racist attitudes to rise through the NASA ranks and do the calculations for rocket launches like John Glenn's orbit of Earth. Oscar-worthy performances from Taraji P. Henson and Octavia Spencer. Gave it 10 ducks.

10. Crazy prediction: Either the Warriors or Cavs will not make the 2017 NBA Finals.

BOHLS, GOLDEN CHAT

Join columnists Kirk Bohls and Cedric Golden at 11 a.m. Wednesday for their weekly live chat at hookem.com. And catch their weekly "On Second Thought" podcasts on Thursdays.

HOW CRAZY WAS HE?

Looking back at Kirk's crazy prediction from Jan. 27, 2016 — that Peyton Manning would end up not retiring, but instead sign with the Houston Texans. One year later, how did that work out? He obviously got his Broncos quarterbacks mixed up; Houston instead signed Brock Osweiler.

About the Author



KIRK BOHLS Kirk Bohls is a sports columnist for the Austin American-Statesman.



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