

Hall of Fame Running Back In Game Of His Life

By Michael Fournier
Staff Writer

Hall of Fame running back and Chicago Bears legend Walter Payton recently revealed that he has a rare liver disease and will need a transplant within the next two years.

Speaking at an emotional news conference where he at times broke into tears, Payton urged his friends and fans to pray for him. The 44-year-old Payton said he feels fine and is "as healthy as I can be."

"I survived a lot of hits playing football, and this is just something else that I'm going to have to overcome," Payton said in an interview after the news conference.

"It's out of my hands now, though, so we'll just have to stay positive and pray things go well."

Payton's physician, Dr. Joseph A. Lagattuta, a liver specialist, said that Payton has primary sclerosing cholangitis. The disease, whose cause is unknown, affects three of every 100,000 people and blocks the flow of bile out of the liver and damages liver cells.

Lagattuta estimated that without a transplant, Payton would live approximately two years, but said that the survival rate after a transplant is very high.

"A one-year survival rate is approximately 88 percent with long-term survival very promising," Lagattuta said. "We have every hope that Walter will receive a transplant and after the operation return to a normal, active life."

Vikings suffer Disappointing Winter Homecoming Loss

By Al Randolph

In a nationally televised game and a battle for first place in the Eastern Division of the CIAA, the Virginia Union Panthers (10-2, 5-1) and the Elizabeth City State Vikings (11-3, 3-2) were ready for the challenge. After a crucial overtime win over St. Paul's, the Vikings wanted to continue their success in the CIAA.

In the first half, the Vikings got off to a good start offensively and defensively. The Vikings were aware of the Panther's guard, William Davis, who's ranked number seven in scoring in the CIAA. The Vikings key player, William Fitzgerald, is the leading scorer in the CIAA. It wasn't a shoot-out in the first half as Union went on a run at the end of the half for a 38-23 lead. Davis dropped 14 in the half. Virginia Union's defensive pressure and rebounding allowed them to slowly get back in the game.

Payton said he first began to feel ill in July, and consulted Lagattuta on Oct. 1 of this year.

Mr. Payton is also receiving treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., where he said he will return in the next few weeks to be evaluated for a donor and be placed on the transplant list.

Mr. Payton's wife estimates that her husband has lost about 25 pounds since the symptoms began in early July.

In addition to the weight loss, the disease's symptoms include fatigue, fever and jaundice, a yellowing of the eyes and skin pigment.

Payton said he probably would not have come public with his disease had it not been for a public appearance last week, during which members of the local news media noticed his physical appearance, fueling rumors about his declining health. Payton, who played 13 years for the Bears, led them to the 1985 Super Bowl championship and was selected to the Pro Bowl nine times. He is probably best known for breaking Jim Brown's record for rushing yardage, accumulating 16,726 yards, a mark that still stands.

He also holds the single-game record, running for 275 yards against Minnesota in 1977.

Payton was the Bears' first round draft pick in 1975 after setting dozens of National Collegiate Athletic Association and school records at Jackson State University.

In the second half, the Vikings came out with a new strategy trying to contain the Panther's William Davis and free up 3-pointer shooter William Fitzgerald to regain the lead. With a tenacious man to man defense, the Vikings found themselves down by nine at the six-minute mark in the game. The Panthers kept their poise on both ends of the floor in the second half and the results were the same as in the first. Fitzgerald finished with 26 points, but his scoring wasn't enough as the Vikings fell 83-65.

The ECSU Vikings then traveled to meet the Bulldogs of Bowie State (2-17, 0-10), looking to bounce back from the Virginia Union loss. The Bulldogs came out confident looking for their first CIAA win of the season as they put together a 10-point half-time lead. William Fitzgerald had a slow start, but he redeemed himself in the second half as he scored 20 points to lead the Vikings to a 79-75 win over the Bulldogs.



photo courtesy of Eugene O'Neal

ECSU's Che Lugo in action against arch rival Virginia Union.

Vikings Baseball Schedule

3/16	*Shaw University	Home
3/20	*Virginia State	Away
3/23	*St. Augustine's College	Away
3/27	*Bowie State	Home
3/31	*St. Paul's College	Home
4/2	*St. Augustine's College	Home
4/8	*Shaw University	Away
4/12	*Virginia State	Home
4/14	*St. Paul's College	Away
4/17	*Bowie State	Away
4/22-24	CIAA Tournament--Petersburg, VA	
	*CIAA Conference Games	

Vikings Softball Schedule

3/19-21	MIDSEASON ROUNDUP Charlotte, NC	
3/19	Johnson C. Smith	Away
3/19	North Carolina Central	Away
3/20	Winston-Salem State	Away
3/20	St. Augustine's College	Away
3/21	Fayetteville State	Away
3/23	Shaw University	Away
3/24	St. Augustine's College	Away
3/27	Virginia State	Away
4/1	Virginia Union	Away
4/6	Virginia Union	Home
4/8	Bowie State	Away
4.10	Virginia State	Home
4/16-18	CIAA Softball Tournament - Charlotte, NC	