THE PEOPLE V. FOOTBALL

By now, the evidence is irrefutable, and every bloody Sunday (and Monday and Thursday) it becomes a little harder not to cringe with each collision. But if you’re a guy like former star linebacker Fred McNair, who’s living with the effects of those hits, the question is: How can we keep watching the game—and how can we keep asking our kids to play it?

ROBERT MAXWELL
“She hangs up the phone. ‘Fred?’ she says, calling him on her cell. ‘Are you coming down? I’m outside waiting for you and to bring me something.’”

There really is an office. He’s not making it up. He’s not delusional. One of the things that happens to people when they begin losing their minds is they fall prey to vulgury. One such vulgurist swooped in Fred about three years ago. An old man-pedophile off the dusty back room of his little green house over on Arlington. The man had used for a befuddled lawyer with a valid license to manipulte, get him to sign legal documents, do his bidding. Fred would show up each day, suit and tie, me, thinking about him and my perspective’s changed. A limp is one thing, but if you’re talking about brain trauma, that’s a whole lot scarier.

Fred McNeil spent eleven seasons with the Vikings, earning a law license in 1984. His memory started fading in 1994. He’s in this world, too, people.
What Fred would do was sit in the apartment alone, and he would hold the blade to his wrist and look at it. That’s what he would start thinking. The thinking ruined everything. He wasn’t going to let it upset him if I do this” or “I hate my life.” Nothing like that. Instead, he would feel the cool blade on his skin, and he would consider how thin and baby soft that skin was, and he would think. This is going to hurt like hell. It might actually have been quite simple if not for the pain part.

The pills the doctor gave him must be doing some good, because it’s been two weeks since he sat there with the scissors in his hand and told himself to go for it. He had it all worked out even before the test. He had heard somewhere that a woman’s memory is superior to a man’s. Now, why would that be? Emotion, he reasoned. Women are more emotional than men, so they must attach emotion to every answer on the memory test. At least that’s what that was. Men, so they must attach emotion to every answer on the memory test. At least that’s what that was. Men.

The nurse was telling him he had learned. Fred was upset. "I did, you fine, Fred,” the nurse says, and she ushered him to another office, where a beautiful, tall blonde doctor in a miniskirt puts a white t-shirt on Fred’s head, an elastic cap dotted with sensors. She squirts girl in the little holes and hooks wires into it and connects the wires to a computer, and then she tells Fred to stare at either the orbit or the bear, his choice. Fred chooses the bear, and for about ten minutes the computer reads his brain waves to determine, according to the doctor, how he deals with his “daydreaming” waves. The doctor had fed Fred a lot of facts about his memory, and he said they were selling the photo on nfl.com for $24.99. He was, after all, getting college for free. He kept getting better at it, but then he realized if they got a great running back and you hurt him, you might win the game, you know? So he actually started getting used to that as a thing to do.

So he postponed the doctor’s idea, switched to economics, figuring this was just a delay. He would have to go to college for free. He got his first concussion during freshman year. “I got hit. I felt–she she she,” he said. He holds his head up to his head, rocks back and forth. “I felt dizzy and just… I couldn’t stand up, and I was like that for a week.”

He’s sitting alone in the apartment, a strip of lights, so there aren’t any events on the game. It was one, couch, TV, giant shoes strewn everywhere. He is a stripped-down bachelor pad if ever there was one. “I came up under his chin, knocked him out, and I just turned and hit him with my head. I came up under his chin, knocked him out, and I just turned and hit him with my head.”

He kept getting better at it, feeling the static. He was, after all, getting college for free. He kept getting better at it. He felt like he was doing something right. He was winning! He was winning!

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In spring of 2010, Tia, Fred, and Freddie, and Gavin traveled to the Indepen-
dent-Columnists Players Foundation's site at the South Point Hotel just off the Vegas strip.

Fred was full on immersion into the world of football and dementia—a vast, confusing, seemingly infinite parallel universe. All this time, all those years of urging Fred to go to an eye doctor—the only thing he had said in years. Jennet Omulu stood up to explain the science behind his discovery, and showed the audience the tale of Fred’s tax talks, and the advances, including the ability—soon, he be-
lieved—to diagnose CTE in a living person.

Jennet Omulu was a team of researchers from Boston. He was a former college wrestler who’d gotten into the work because of his own bruised brain. He passed out paperwork. Sign up to donate your brain to our group when you die. Sign up to donate your brain.

Fred sat next to Tia, listening to the speak-
ers. Well, Fred always looks like he’s listen-
ing and following, but the truth is, he’s able to
remember. He understood he was unable to
remember. He understood he was unable to
coordinate things, and it disturbed him that he could not
remember. He understood he was unable to keep up with the
whole gig has become more like being slowly
Your thoughts are going to be, ‘What the hell, they

Fred didn’t come close to covering the cost of the

So far, the youngest player to be diagnosed with CTE has been 21-year-old

The boys were so young they thought their
dad was just in case.

He understood he was unable to

He means with his girlfriend, an elderly

He understands he was unable to

He has told her that

to the league by Sylvia Mackey, wife of Hall

His mother told reporters that her son

He means with his girlfriend, an elderly

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