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### Here's hoping latest concussion is Thomas' last



Oct. 5, 2007  
By Lesley Visser  
CBS Sports

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When Troy Aikman announced his retirement from the NFL after 12 years and three Super Bowl championships, he choked back tears and said, "I know it's the right thing for me because of my health, because of the concussions. It took its toll."

I remember being in the Cowboys locker room for CBS in the third quarter of the NFC Championship Game in 1993 when Troy suffered yet another concussion. I was 20 feet away from him when the doctors put smelling salts under his nose and asked him where he was.



Zach Thomas hasn't played since Sept. 16 vs. Dallas. (US Presswire)

Here's the part where I criticize myself -- it's Zach's career, not mine.

He has team doctors telling him whether he's sound enough to play. I'm in the role of big sister, probably overly worried and sticking my nose in where it doesn't belong. I don't blame Zach if he's mad at me for this, but I'd rather say it now than be praying for him later.

We still don't know enough about concussions, but we know enough to be deeply concerned.

What, exactly, is going on during those brain-rattling hits? It's not pretty. The brain ricochets off the skull so hard that the "cerebrospinal fluid" cannot protect the brain. It's an egg, from the inside, being smashed against the shell. The force of a hit to the head averages 98 times the force of gravity, and the impact causes bruising of the brain, torn blood vessels and possible permanent nerve damage.

When Carolina linebacker Dan Morgan suffered his fifth concussion last year, owner Jerry Richardson refused to let Morgan play, even though a specialist had pronounced him ready to go.

We should remember the cautionary tale of Ted Johnson, the former Patriots linebacker who retired before the 2005 season, admitting that he endured up to 30 concussions. He now suffers from depression so severe that sometimes he doesn't leave his house for days. He's 34, same age as Zach.

But Zach is smart, and the Dolphins are careful. Doctors tell me he has proved to be asymptomatic, that he shows no signs of memory loss, no trouble walking or talking and that an MRI was completely normal neurologically. The same is true for quarterback Trent Green, who, you'll remember, was knocked unconscious last year in Week 1, then spent two nights in a Kansas City hospital.

The whole scene just bears watching.

Remember Frank Wycheck, the hero of the Music City Miracle? Did you know he retired in 2003 because of concussions? He says he battles headaches and depression "constantly."

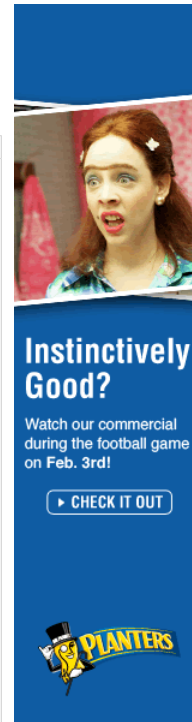
Commissioner Roger Goodell has taken this topic to heart, as did Paul Tagliabue before him. When Sylvia Mackey, wife of Hall of Fame tight end John Mackey, wrote a letter to Tagliabue saying her husband suffers from dementia, the NFL started the 88 Plan (named for Mackey's famous No. 88). The program offers \$88,000 a year to any former player suffering from dementia who's living in a treatment center.

I just don't want Zach Thomas to qualify.

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**jmat13**  
Reputation:96  
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2006

October 7, 2007 6:15 am

Score: 93

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At some point, somebody has to stand up to these players and say enough is enough,

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andthey cannot play anymore. Dont give me the arguement that they are grown men and can decide for themselves. These guys are adrenealine junkies, they liv efor and love the game, the roar of the crowd and the "high" that g...(more)

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Score: 86

 **OhioStateCanes**  
Reputation:98  
Level:Superstar  
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October 5, 2007 4:47 pm

**Wait...**

Lesley Visser and Zach Thomas are related? Or did I miss something in the article. It said she was in the role of "big sister" so... are they?

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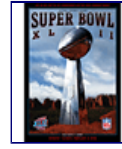
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