

SPORTS



PUNCH DRUNK

Sentinel-Voice photo by Jonathan Olsen

Las Vegas Charles Shufford (left), a graduate of Eldorado High School, eats a punch from Russian Wladimir Klitschko during their heavyweight bout Saturday at the Mandalay Bay Events Center. Klitschko scored a fourth-round knockout. After the fight, Klitschko said he was ready to challenge elite heavyweights.

Stringer

(Continued from Page 1) loved him. The 6-foot-4, 335-pound offensive tackle was later buried there in his purple No. 77 Vikings jersey.

"He'd be shocked by all the people here today," Vikings teammate Cris Carter said after the service, which was closed to reporters. "He thought he was just a normal person."

Carter joined Stringer's wife, Kelci, at the funeral along with dozens of Vikings, including Daunte Culpepper, Randy Moss and coach Dennis Green; plus former Ohio State teammates Eddie George of the Tennessee Titans and Orlando Pace of the St. Louis Rams.

"It was a rejoicing - that he's moved on," Pace said. "We're sad about that, but hopefully he's gone to a better place."

Alfie Burch, a teammate of Stringer's at Warren G. Harding High School, said the 27-year-old offensive tackle considered himself an "ordinary guy" despite being a Pro Bowl player who made millions.

"He never forgot his hometown and he never forgot the kids," Burch said.

"You could see him down at the mall. He'd stop and he'd talk to everybody. He stayed in touch with all of his old coaches. He was a great person. He just never forgot anyone."

Stringer died early Wednesday, 15 hours after a grueling workout in stifling



Friends and family members serve as pallbearers at the funeral for Minnesota Vikings offensive lineman, Corey Stringer Monday.

humidity and temperatures in the 90s.

NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue, visiting the Cleveland Browns in Berea, said he does not believe the league will change its training camp schedule to reduce the risk of heatstroke.

He said, however, that the league needs to examine potential health issues facing increasingly large players.

"You can intellectualize about the risk of the game, you can understand all the risks theoretically, but you never expect to lose a player, have a player die playing the game," he said.

"It's our obligation now to try to learn from that."

In a statement, the family thanked Stringer's fans for their support, adding "We acknowledge the most difficult hours are ahead."

In addition to his wife, Stringer was survived by 3-

year-old son, Kodie; parents, James and Cathy; brother, Kevin; and sister, Kim.

"Corey was just a ball of fire. Everybody loved him. He was a joy to be around," Brandon Taylor, a friend of the family, said after the service. Stringer's third-grade teacher at Horace Mann School, Mary Sabel, read several of his report cards during the funeral.

At the beginning of the year she had written, "I know you're capable of getting A's. I expect you to work harder." By the end, her message was, "I knew you had it in you to be an A student. You've risen to the challenge."

"If he could speak right now he'd be wondering why everybody is making all this fuss today," said Phil Annarella, Stringer's high school football coach. "And I'd tell him it's because you deserve it."

USIFL player collapses, dies

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) - Curtis Jones loved football so much that he kept playing into his mid-30s, running the ball and anchoring the defensive line in a second-tier indoor league.

While playing for the Utah Lyonzz of the United States Inside Football League, the 35-year-old Jones collapsed and died Sunday night after a game in Las Vegas.

"We're all in shock, as you can imagine," team owner Michael Curran said Monday, fighting back tears. "We're emotionally ravaged. It's a nightmare. We want to wake up."

Jones played tight end at the University of Utah and was an assistant coach at Granger High School in Salt Lake City, where he also taught special education. He played fullback and defensive line for the Lyonzz.

"After the game, he just collapsed into the arms of some of the other players," Curran said. "The doctor who treated him thinks his left ventricle collapsed. They shocked him. He didn't recover."

Jones was taken by ambulance to a Las Vegas hospital as players prayed at the arena. Leslie Luke, hospital chief executive officer, said Jones' heart stopped by the time he arrived at the emergency room at 7:54 p.m.

He was pronounced dead 10 minutes later.

Lester Johnson, a linebacker with the opposing Northwest Fire, told the Las Vegas Review-Journal that doctors told players that Jones died of a heart attack or aneurysm.

Clark County Coroner Ron Flud said Monday that toxicology and laboratory analyses could take two weeks. He said there was no indication of foul play, trauma or any criminal activity involved.

Johnson told the Las Vegas Sun that no medical personnel were at the arena and said the USIFL does not require players to undergo physical exams.

A league administrator, Chris Boudreaux, did not return repeated messages left at his Las Vegas office.

The coroner said Jones

measured at 6-foot-6 and 276 pounds.

His death comes on the heels of three others in the college and pro football ranks in recent weeks. A funeral was held Monday for Corey Stringer, the Minnesota Vikings tackle who died last week of heatstroke.

A Northwestern University safety died Friday following an asthma attack during sprint drills. A Florida freshman collapsed during practice on July 19 and died a week later.

"Maybe the Lord's putting a football team together," Curran said.

The Las Vegas Fire defeated the Lyonzz 35-21 in a playoff game before Jones was stricken. The USIFL has six teams in Nevada, Utah and California and plays most of its games in Las Vegas.

Jones played at Utah from 1985-88, when current coach Ron McBride was an assistant.

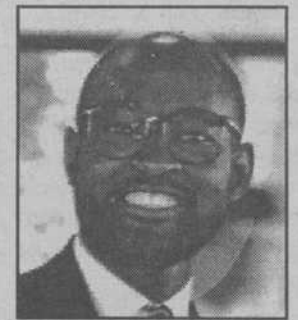
Jones, who is survived by his wife and four children, scored a touchdown just before halftime to give Utah a 14-13 lead.

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