

Doctors still uncertain about Richard's status

by GARY TAYLOR
UPI Sports Writer

HOUSTON — A team of doctors Monday said the blood clot that felled Houston Astros pitcher J. R. Richard cut off the flow of blood to the right side of his brain for as many as four hours, but said it still was too early to know if he suffered permanent damage.

"I would say that this was a major stroke," said team physician Harold Brelsford, one of three doctors participating in an Astrodome news conference to explain Richard's condition and treatment.

The 6-foot-8 all-star pitcher collapsed during a light workout at the Astrodome last Wednesday, four days after his release from Methodist Hospital where he had undergone extensive tests to determine the cause of fatigue in his pitching arm.

Doctors who examined him for three days then said he had a circulatory problem in his right arm and shoulder that did not require surgery, they said he could resume workouts but probably would be limited in the number of innings he could work in each game for the rest of the season.

But 10 minutes into his first workout Richard, 30, collapsed, and nine hours later underwent a life-saving operation that removed the blood clot which doctors now say did not develop until after his July 26 release from the hospital.

The doctors answered repeated questions Monday about why Richard was allowed to practice so soon after his release.

"Despite finding the initial circulatory blockage, I don't know of any medical treatment that was necessary," said Dr. Charles McCollum, a vascular cardiologist and the doctor who led the surgical team.

Asked to evaluate Richard's condition, McCollum said, "he still has marked weakness... it may be transient or it may be permanent. He has shown improvement of motor functions."

Doctors have said since the surgery that

Richard's left arm and leg suffered partial paralysis. Earlier they had said they expected to know by Monday night whether the weakness was temporary.

"It's difficult to evaluate his condition," Brelsford said. "He seems to be making improvement every day."

He said Richard has been sitting up in bed in the intensive care unit of the hospital and has shown improved alertness. Richard remains unable to converse but doctors did not indicate whether it was because of tubes which remain in his throat or because of his stroke.

"It's very possible he may not be back this year but we've seen people with strokes return to relatively normal activity," McCollum said.

The doctors provided details for the first time Monday, indicating the seriousness of Richard's condition upon his arrival by ambulance at the hospital.

"The condition was unstable with some irregularities of the heart. The patient was transferred to the intensive care unit where they were stabilized. It was apparent that he had suffered a stroke and that he had no pulse in his right carotid artery," said a statement released at the news conference.

Asked if the stroke was severe enough to kill Richard, McCollum said, "possibly."

Brelsford said doctors had been unable to find "one definite factor" that caused the stroke.

Richard had complained since June 17 of a "dead" right arm. At no time did he say the ailment caused him pain; only that his arm quickly became fatigued when he pitched.

Nevertheless, he started for the National League in the all-star game and pitched two scoreless innings. His last pitching assignment was July 6 when he went three and a third innings before asking to be removed from the game.

Two nights later, Richard tested his arm on the sideline and told pitching coach Mel Wright that the fatigue remained and he was placed on the 21-day disabled list.

Lawless becomes latest Dallas Cowboy to retire

THOUSAND OAKS Calif. — Five-year veteran Burton Lawless, the Dallas Cowboys' only experienced reserve guard, is retiring because he has no zest for football.

Lawless, 26, said he will work for Flatt Stationers, an office and school supplies firm in Mexia, Texas, near his 45-acre ranch in Groesbeck. He eventually hopes to raise horses.

Burton announced his retirement Sunday, saying, "my heart's not in it anymore."

"The Cowboys have been good to me," he said. "I didn't want to give them just a halfway effort. It's best to get out healthy and happy."

"I almost left a week ago, but my best friend on the team, Randy Hughes, talked me into staying this long. But I remember on the first practice of two-a-days, I asked myself the question, 'What am I doing here?'"

Lawless did tell Landry that he would come back and play if the team's starting guards were injured.

After being a second round draft choice out of Florida in 1975, Lawless became the first rookie to start in the Cowboys offensive line since Ralph Neely in 1965. That, however, was his only year as a starter and since has been a backup to Herb Scott and Tom Rafferty.

Landry said wide receiver Drew Pearson would not play for three weeks because of a hairline fracture in his shoulder. Safety Randy Hughes, however, will wear a

harness to protect a dislocated shoulder and continue playing.

Hughes had been set to return to Dallas to see team doctor Marvin Knight but Landry reversed that decision in a conference with Hughes and conversations with the physician.

"Right now we've decided to let him get the soreness out and put a strap on it and see how he does."

Landry. "He's worked awful hard to get ready for the season and I think he can play with it. It just depends on how much he'll be handicapped by not being able to reach high over his head."

Landry said Hughes would miss between a week and 10 days of practice. After that Hughes may be played in the Aug. 16 exhibition game against the Los Angeles Rams.

Argovitz gives Baltimore last chance to sign

United Press International

BALTIMORE — Curtis Dickey of Texas A&M University, the Baltimore Colts' top pick in the NFL draft, may play in Canada if the Colts don't come up with a better contract offer or trade him by Thursday, his agent says.

At least one other NFL team has offered an "acceptable" contract for Dickey, said Jerry Argovitz, a Houston dentist who negotiated a multi-million dollar contract with Detroit for Billy Sims of Oklahoma, the first pick in the NFL draft.

If the Colts don't meet that contract or offer to trade the speedy running back, he said he would recommend Dickey play this season in the Canadian Football League.

Dick Szymanski, Colts general manager had no comment Monday.

Last week Szymanski broke his usual silence on contract matters and announced that Argovitz rejected a \$1.2 million contract over unspecified number of years.

Argovitz said Saturday with Szymanski were encouraging owner Robert Isray had become a stumbling block. The agent said he talked to Isray last week and was offended by his comments.

"We didn't talk about signing Dickey," Argovitz said. "It was a personal attack on men and agents. He told me that all Colts were off except the first and that I better come to Chicago where Isray lives with my tail between my legs and get ready to negotiate downward."

"I have been challenged personally. And if that is the way it is well I can get down in the street and fight too."

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