

Monday • August 11, 1997

Injuries plague expansion quarterbacks

Collins breaks jaw, Panthers forced to regroup

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Panthers — already struggling on offense — suddenly face a more urgent problem: Kerry Collins has a broken jaw and is sidelined indefinitely.

The Pro Bowl quarterback of the NFC West champions was injured during Saturday night's 23-13 exhibition loss to the Denver Broncos. Standing in the pocket as he completed a pass, Collins took a vicious hit to the head in the second quarter from linebacker Bill Romanowski.

He underwent surgery Sunday and it's unlikely he will play in the Aug. 31 opener against Washington, and he could be out for more than a month.

The quarterback job now goes to journeyman Steve Beuerlein, an 11-year veteran who was 3-1 as a starter in 1996 when Collins went down with several injuries.

"I don't think there is really anybody on this football team that feels like I have to prove anything to them," said Beuerlein, who is 25-25 as an NFL starter for six different teams. "They have confidence in me and until I show them otherwise I don't think that will change. I don't plan on letting them see that side."

Collins threw for 2,454 yards last season and had only nine interceptions in leading Carolina to the NFC title game.

The Panthers had scored only one touchdown and 22 points in an 0-2 exhibition start while trying to break in a relatively new receiving corps.

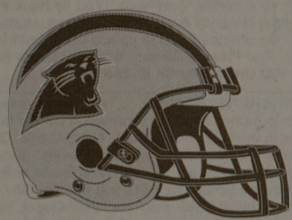
"We can't let it be a starting over process," said wide receiver Ernie Mills, who signed as a free agent from Pittsburgh. "As receivers we can't say, 'OK, now we've got to start over and adjust to Steve.' We are wide receivers, our job is to go out there and catch the ball regardless of who the starter is."

Beuerlein is the first to admit his talent and ability doesn't match up to that of the rugged Collins. "My game is a lot different than Kerry's game," Beuerlein said. "I'm

not able to do some of the things he is physically. I don't know if I would have been able to take that hit any better than he did. I make up for it in other ways."

Coach Dom Capers said he was looking downfield when Collins was struck and couldn't comment on Romanowski's hit. Capers said he would look at the tape before deciding to ask the league to review the hit. There was no flag on the play.

"It was a head-to-head shot, which is not what you are looking for anytime, much less a preseason game," Beuerlein said. "It's not going to make Kerry feel any better if there is a fine involved. The bottom line is he has a long way to go whatever the situation may be. He's got to get himself ready."



Brunell's knee injury hobbles Jaguars

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — The Jacksonville Jaguars' hopes of reaching the Super Bowl in their third season may have taken a big hit following a knee injury to quarterback Mark Brunell.

Brunell, who carried the Jaguars to the AFC title game in their second year last season, injured his right knee with 6:54 left in the first half of Saturday night's 38-16 exhibition win over the New York Giants.

Brunell was scheduled for an MRI Sunday, but neither coach Tom Coughlin nor his players seemed optimistic. The Jaguars now turn to backup Rob Johnson, who has thrown all of seven passes in two seasons.

"It's a whole new ballgame now," Johnson said. "I've done well in practice. Now we'll find out what I can do in the NFL."

Johnson certainly looked like a Super Bowl quarterback for one exhibition game, going 5-for-7 for 170 yards and two touchdowns, including a 60-yarder to Jimmy Smith right after Brunell went down. When he entered, the Jaguars had been outgained 170-45, although they trailed just 6-3.

Brunell was obtained from

Green Bay before the 1995 season and played the last 11 games that season. He then emerged in the second half of last year as one of the NFL's top young quarterbacks.

He was the only quarterback to take every snap for his team in 1996. He led the NFL in passing yards (4,367) and rushing yards for a quarter-

back (396) and his 4,763 total yards was the fifth-highest ever by an NFL quarterback.

"He's our heart. It's as simple as that," said Pro Bowl receiver Keenan McCardell. "He's the piece of the puzzle that can get us to the Super Bowl."

Johnson has played in only one regular-season game during his two years, completing 3-of-7 passes for 24 yards with one interception. His career quarterback rating is 12.0.

Brunell was hit by a blitzing

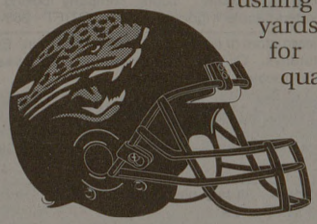
Jessie Armstead as he planted his right leg on the artificial turf at Giants Stadium. Armstead appeared to be blocked to the ground by Natrone Means and slid into Brunell.

"It was in no way deliberate," said Armstead, who had a serious knee injury in college at Miami. "The back hit me. I hit the ground and kind of rolled into his leg."

"It's scary to see your quarterback sitting on the ground," said Smith. "I've never been in this situation before, where you suddenly have a new quarterback."

Added Coughlin: "It's frustrating when a guy gets hurt when the game doesn't count — or when it does count. But it's the way football is. It's a dangerous game — on turf or on grass. A guy can get injured planting his foot on grass during a practice session. You just never know."

Johnson was a fourth-round choice in 1995, Jacksonville's first season. He was the first pick of the second day although he was projected much higher. Some scouts considered him a first-rounder, but there were questions about his attitude and work ethic.



Maddux becomes highest-paid player

ATLANTA (AP) — Greg Maddux became baseball's highest-paid player Sunday, signing a five-year contract extension with the Atlanta Braves that will pay him \$57.5 million.

"I love playing here," the four-time Cy Young award winner said. "It's been a great five years and I look forward to the next five."

Maddux's agent, Scott Boras, said the deal included a signing bonus and no deferred money. The package averages \$11.5 million a year and is guaranteed.

The 31-year-old right-hander leapfrogs past Barry Bonds of San Francisco and Albert Belle of Cleve-

land in the salary game. Bonds will earn an average of \$11.45 million a year, beginning in 1999, and Belle makes \$11 million.

Maddux is in the final season of a \$28 million, five-year contract that pays him \$6.5 million this season.

"They made me a nice deal," he said. "I'd be a fool not to take it."

The signing was announced before the Braves played the Florida Marlins. Atlanta general manager John Schuerholz attended the Turner

Field news conference and called Maddux a "very vital part of the Atlanta Braves organization."

Maddux supplanted teammate Tom Glavine as the top-paid pitcher in baseball. Those two join John Smoltz and Denny Neagle in agreeing to long-term deals with the Braves, whose starting rotation has been baseball's best during the 1990s.

Glavine, the winningest pitcher in the majors since 1991 with 111 victories, signed a four-year contract extension for \$34 million in May. That pushed the left-hander past Toronto's Roger Clemens as the top earner among pitchers.



Kile wins ninth straight

Houston beats up on Mets' Rick Reed, 11-8

NEW YORK (AP) — Darryl Kile won his ninth straight decision despite allowing two home runs to John Olerud, and the Houston Astros held on to defeat the New York Mets 11-8 Sunday.

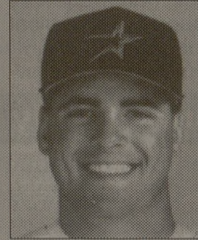
The Astros gave Kile (16-3) a 5-0 lead in the first inning. Kile gave up eight runs and 10 hits in seven innings,

striking out eight.

Olerud's solo home run in the third pulled the Mets within 5-4. He highlighted a four-run seventh with a two-run homer, his 16th, as New York closed to 11-8.

Tom Martin got five outs for his second save. The Astros won their second in a row after losing five straight games.

The Astros scored five times in the first inning against Rick Reed (10-5), helped by a pair of errors. Bill Spiers and Brad Ausmus hit RBI singles.



Kile

WHAT'S IT LIKE AT THE PLASMA CENTER?

To the staff of the Plasma Center,

I would like to start by saying thank you to each and every employee for making the past three years enjoyable in a professional, efficient and courteous environment. As a donor since 1993, I have been more than satisfied with every aspect of your operation, which allows myself and others to contribute what we can to community service, all the while being serviced by diligent, but relaxed, workers. Everyone at the Plasma Center, from those behind the front counter to the phlebotomists to the supervisors, have made great efforts to insure that each donor feels hygienically safe, as well as keeping the atmosphere light.

Like most, I started coming to the Plasma Center for monetary reasons, but I soon developed acquaintances that appealed to me almost as much as the original need for money, enabling me to look forward to each donation, not only for my wallet's sake but also

to see my friends. Like I commented to someone recently, talking to people at the Plasma Center was like getting mail from a far-off friend that you don't get to do much with, but who you can talk to as often as you write. For those acquaintances and for your continual services. I would like to thank all of those I've come to know and appreciate over the past three years - Emily, and Tracy, Heath, and Marty, Ada and Josie, etc... more I can't remember or those who have gone on to better things.

So, as I graduate from this great University, I bid you all a fond farewell and strong commendations on such a successful blend of quality medical practice and friendly service. Thank you all and have a great summer. Thanks, C.F.

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