

Blood clot causes Thomas' death

MIAMI (AP) — Derrick Thomas' legs weren't red or swollen and his body temperature was normal.

There were no visible signs of a blood clot, doctors said Wednesday. But when Thomas was being moved from his hospital bed to a wheelchair on his way to therapy Tuesday morning, something triggered a massive blood clot in his pulmonary artery that provides blood and oxygen from the heart to the lungs.

Thomas, 33, told his mother he wasn't feeling well just before his eyes rolled back, said Dr. Frank Eismont, an orthopedic surgeon at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

The Chiefs star, who held the NFL record of seven sacks in a game, went into cardio-respiratory arrest. Thomas, paralyzed from the chest down in a car crash two weeks earlier, died minutes later.

The cause of death, confirmed Wednesday by an autopsy, is common for paralysis victims.

"A certain percentage of people with paralysis suffer from blood clots," said Dr. Barth Green, a neurosurgeon at Jackson Memorial Hospital. "Sometimes you can see them and sometimes they're hidden in the deeper veins of the body, and that's what happened with Derrick."

Between 3 percent and 15 percent of spinal cord injury patients suffer from blood clots, Green said.

Thomas was driving a car during a snowstorm on Jan. 23 as he and two friends headed to the Kansas City airport to fly to St. Louis for the NFC championship game. He lost control of the car, and it overturned several times.

Police said Thomas was speeding and weaving in traffic, but no charges were filed.

Thomas and passenger Michael Tellis, 49, were not wearing seat belts and were thrown from the car. Tellis was killed and Thomas' spine and neck were broken. The third person in the car was wearing a seat belt and received minor injuries.

Thomas was brought to the hospital in Miami, his hometown, where he had surgery to repair his spinal column.

The nine-time Pro Bowl linebacker had been on blood thinners since the accident, doctors said. Therapists also used mechanical devices on Thomas daily that intermittently contracted his legs to help circulate blood.

"We took all the aggressive precautions that are available to people today. It just wasn't enough."

— Dr. Barth Green
neurosurgeon, Jackson Memorial Hospital

"We took all the aggressive precautions that are available to people today," Green said. "It just wasn't enough." Added Eismont: "If I were to have it all to do over again, I wouldn't do anything different."

Thomas had been progressing quickly in rehabilitation. He was allowed out of the hospital last weekend — although a nurse and a physician stayed with him — and he had been talking about returning to Kansas City within the next few months, said Dr. Jon Browne, Chiefs team physician.

A news conference had been discussed that would have informed the public of Thomas' upcoming moves.

Thomas left behind thousands of grieving fans and nearly as many friends and relatives trying to cope with his sudden death. He will be remembered in both Kansas City, Mo., and Miami within the next 10 days.

Memorial services are set to begin in Kansas City and then move to Miami, Thomas' hometown and the place where he will be buried.

There will be a viewing Monday at Thomas' church in Kansas City, then a memorial service at Kemper Arena the following day, Chiefs president Carl Peterson said.

"I'm not sure it can hold all the people who want to attend," Peterson said. "It will be a public opportunity for Derrick's fans and friends to honor him."

Thomas will be transferred back to Miami, where there will be a viewing Feb. 18. He will be buried Feb. 19.

The reason for the delay is because Thomas' aunt, Edith Morgan's sister, died last weekend, Peterson said. Thomas' family will be at her funeral Saturday in Tallahassee.

A week before he died, Thomas dictated a thank you letter for the outpouring of support he and his family had received since the accident. It will be released soon, Peterson said.

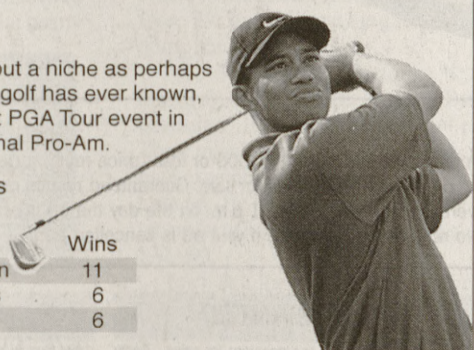
An All-American at Alabama, the 6-foot-3, 255-pound Thomas became an immediate star as a pass-rushing specialist after being taken in the first round of the 1989 draft. He was an All-Pro in his first nine seasons and ranked ninth on the career list with 126 1/2 sacks.

He set the sack record of seven against Seattle in 1990. That game was on Veterans Day, and Thomas dedicated his performance to his father, an Air Force pilot killed in Vietnam.

Thomas is survived by his mother; his son, Derrick Thomas Jr., 8; and a half-brother, Gregory Morgan, 19.

Tiger's tale

Tiger Woods is carving out a niche as perhaps the most exciting player golf has ever known, winning his sixth straight PGA Tour event in the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.



Most consecutive wins

| Year | Player | Wins |
|---------|--------------|------|
| 1945 | Byron Nelson | 11 |
| 1999-00 | Tiger Woods | 6 |
| 1948 | Ben Hogan | 6 |

The streak

| Tournament | Score | Total | Earnings |
|------------------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|
| ● Pebble Beach National Pro-Am | 273 | 15-under | \$720,000 |
| ● Mercedes Championships | 276 | 16-under | 522,000 |
| ● American Express Championship | 278 | 6-under | 1,000,000 |
| ● The Tour Championship | 269 | 15-under | 900,000 |
| ● National Car Rental Golf Classic | 271 | 17-under | 450,000 |
| ● NEC Invitational | 270 | 10-under | 1,000,000 |

Woods' run causing PGA to raise its game

Everybody was warned. As the final Ryder Cup practice round wound down last September, swing guru Butch Harmon stood alongside a tee box. His foot was in a cast and his celebrated pupil was stuck on the other side of a crowd that had swelled to five deep.

He didn't bother looking for Tiger Woods, waiting instead for the "crack!" of the golf ball. As the gallery marched off, Harmon turned, "Wait until you see what Tiger's been working on."

What followed on a short walk to the clubhouse was a conversation only a golf junkie could love. Harmon said Woods' swing had progressed so far — gaining consistency without sacrificing power — that they were experimenting with shots nobody else touched.

He gave this example: Players hood the face on their clubs to create "knockdowns" — typically mid-to-short-iron shots that bore through the wind. Woods was hitting knockdowns,

too, but with a 3-wood. The ball was traveling 75 feet high, but a ridiculous 270 yards down the fairway by the time it quit rolling.

"That's not all, either," he said. "Honest."

The shot Woods needed to shape Sunday to kick-start his comeback at the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am needed less than a third of that distance, a higher trajectory and it had to stop a lot faster. Until recently, it was a shot Woods didn't own.

From 100 yards, he usually hit a sand wedge with enough backspin to put Tommy Smothers' yo-yo tricks to shame. But on this day, with 97 yards left at the par-4, 15th hole, Woods throttled back to a pitching wedge. With a stiff-armed swing, he landed the ball just right of the flag, where it promptly made a left-hand turn into the cup for an eagle.

At the next green, from 115 yards, See WOODS on Page 11.

Rodman makes return to NBA with Mavericks

DALLAS (AP) — It didn't take long for Dennis Rodman to make his presence felt in Dallas, on and off the court.

Playing before a boisterous sellout crowd that featured Deion Sanders and Emmitt Smith sitting courtside, Rodman grabbed nine rebounds and took a hard foul that briefly knocked out Seattle's Ruben Patterson in just his first half

as a Maverick.

Rodman, who wore No. 70, didn't look like a 38-year-old guy who has been out of the NBA for 10 months. In 16 minutes, he also had three fouls and a length-of-the-court assist following one rebound. There was one sign of rust: he got caught playing illegal defense twice, the second giving Seattle a technical free throw.

Rodman was aggressive from the get-go, snatching the game's first miss and being fouled by Vin Baker. Then Patterson made the mistake of trying to drive to the hoop through Rodman. They both

went down, but only Rodman got up. Patterson, who was called for a charge, remained flat on his face for several minutes.

Rodman sat out the first few minutes of the second quarter, but he grabbed the first available rebound when he returned. There was a near blowup soon after, though, as he was called for two quick fouls — both of which he disagreed with.

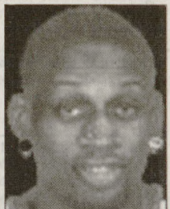
An obviously peeved Rodman ran up the court cupping the ball as if he were going to heave it, but instead marched to

the far sideline and placed it down softly.

He spent the last 2:42 of the quarter on the bench, then walked silently to the locker room at halftime with a towel over his blonde head. Seattle led 59-51.

The fans who made this just the second sellout of the season made it obvious who they were here to see as they howled for everything Rodman did.

Some had homemade signs, such as "Welcome back Worm. We missed you. Go Mavs." Six shirtless teen-agers wore goofy hats and wigs and had R-O-D-M-A-N spelled on their chests.



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