

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI
AT INDEPENDENCE**

ALEXANDER LOUIS COOPER)
705 Powers Ferry Rd #111)
Marietta, Georgia 30067;)

and)

LEONARD GRIFFIN and his wife)
DAWN SAVITRA GRIFFIN)
799 Hwy 144)
Calhoun, Louisiana 71225;)

Case No.:

and)

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN and his wife)
YOLANDA THOMPSON-MARTIN)
1711 E. 60th St.)
Kansas City, MO 64110;)

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

and)

JOSEPH PHILLIPS)
425 Barker Avenue)
Oregon City, Oregon 97045;)

and)

KEVIN PORTER and his wife)
ANNJELA HYNES-PORTER)
20 Savannah Dr.)
Senoia, Georgia 30276)

Plaintiffs,)

v.)

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS)
FOOTBALL CLUB, INC.)
Serve at Registered Agent:)
Seigfreid Bingham Levy)
Selzer & Gee, P.C.)
911 Main Street, Suite 2800)
Kansas City MO 64105)

Defendant.)

PETITION FOR DAMAGES

COMES NOW Plaintiffs, and for their claims and causes of action against Defendant,
upon information and belief, state:

PLAINTIFFS

1. Plaintiff Alexander Louis Cooper is a resident of Georgia. Mr. Cooper was employed as a professional football player with the Kansas City Chiefs between 1985 and 1991.

2. Between August 31, 1987 and January 1991, Mr. Cooper suffered multiple concussive and subconcussive injuries.

3. Defendant's wrongful conduct, as alleged herein, directly caused or directly contributed to cause Mr. Cooper to develop post-concussion syndrome and latent brain disease, including, upon information and belief, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy.

4. Plaintiff Leonard Griffin and his wife Dawn Savitra Griffin are residents of Louisiana. Mr. Griffin was employed as a professional football player with the Kansas City Chiefs between 1986 and 1993.

5. Between August 31, 1987 and January 1993, Mr. Griffin suffered multiple concussive and subconcussive injuries.

6. Defendant's wrongful conduct, as alleged herein, directly caused or directly contributed to cause Mr. Griffin to develop post-concussion syndrome and latent brain disease, including, upon information and belief, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy.

7. Plaintiffs Christopher Martin and his wife Yolanda Thompson-Martin are residents of Missouri. Mr. Martin was employed as a professional football player with the Kansas City Chiefs between 1988 and 1993.

8. Between 1988 and January 1993, Mr. Martin suffered multiple concussive and subconcussive injuries.

9. Defendant's wrongful conduct, as alleged herein, directly caused or directly contributed to cause Mr. Martin to develop post-concussion syndrome and latent brain disease, including, upon information and belief, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy.

10. Plaintiff Joseph Phillips is a resident of Oregon. Mr. Phillips was employed as a professional football player with the Kansas City Chiefs between 1992 and 1998.

11. Between October 1992 and January 1993, Mr. Phillips suffered multiple concussive and subconcussive injuries.

12. Defendant's wrongful conduct, as alleged herein, directly caused or directly contributed to cause Mr. Phillips to develop post-concussion syndrome and latent brain disease, including, upon information and belief, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy.

13. Plaintiff Kevin Porter and his wife Annjela Hynes-Porter are residents of Georgia. Mr. Porter was employed as a professional football player with the Kansas City Chiefs between 1988 and 1993.

14. Between July 1988 and January 1993, Mr. Porter suffered multiple concussive and subconcussive injuries.

15. Defendant's wrongful conduct, as alleged herein, directly caused or directly contributed to cause Mr. Porter to develop post-concussion syndrome and latent brain disease, including, upon information and belief, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy.

DEFENDANT

16. Defendant Kansas City Chiefs Football Club, Inc. is a Texas corporation with its principal place of business at One Arrowhead Drive, Kansas City, 64129, Jackson County, Missouri. At all times relevant herein, Defendant Kansas City Chiefs was Plaintiffs' employer. Defendant is a member of the National Football League ("NFL"), which is an unincorporated association consisting of 32 separately owned and independently operated professional football teams.

JURISDICTION

17. Jurisdiction is proper in this Court pursuant to R.S. Mo. 506.500 in that the tortious acts alleged herein took place in Missouri.

18. This is an action requesting relief under the common and statutory laws of the State of Missouri. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, the relevant time period of Plaintiffs' injuries and claims, there was no collective bargaining agreement (CBA) in effect. Because federal labor law is not applicable to Plaintiffs' claims, and no interpretation of a CBA is required, section 301 of the Labor Management Relations Act cannot provide a basis for federal jurisdiction.

19. Plaintiffs' claims do not arise out of an "accident," as that term is defined under Missouri's Workers' Compensation Law. Plaintiffs' occupational disease-related claims were not caused by a specific event during a single work shift injury.

20. Plaintiffs' claims are not within the scope of workers' compensation and they are not subject to the exclusivity provisions of workers' compensation.

VENUE

21. Venue is proper with this Court pursuant to § 508.010. Upon information and belief, Plaintiffs were first injured by the wrongful acts and negligent conduct alleged herein in Jackson County, Missouri.

JOINDER OF CLAIMS

22. Joinder of Plaintiffs' claims are permissible pursuant to Rule 52.05(a) in that the claims alleged herein arise out of the same series of occurrences and involve common questions of law and fact.

TOLLING

23. Plaintiffs' membership in the putative class action currently pending in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania¹ tolled the running of the applicable statute of limitations. In addition, Defendant's improper acts as alleged herein prevented Plaintiffs from ascertaining their latent injuries, including a diagnosis of CTE.

GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

24. Defendant has known or should have known that since 1966 the Congress of Neurological Surgeons defined a concussion as a "clinical syndrome characterized by immediate and transient impairment of neural functions, such as alteration of consciousness, disturbance of vision, equilibrium, etc. due to mechanical forces." Defendant marginalized the risks of brain injuries and regularly referred to concussions as "getting your bell rung" or a "ding."

25. Defendant has known or should have known for many years that post-concussion syndrome (PCS) and cognitive impairment occurs in football players. PCS is defined by the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual* as (1) cognitive deficits in attention or

¹ *In re NFL Players' Concussion Injury Litigation*, No. 2:12-md-02323-AB; *See also, Charles Ray Easterling, et al v. NFL*, No. 11-cv-0509 (filed August 17, 2011).

memory and (2) at least 3 or more of the following symptoms: fatigue, sleep disturbance, headache, dizziness, irritability, affective disturbance, apathy, or personality change. Similarly, the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) defines PCS as involving 3 or more of the following symptoms: headaches, dizziness, fatigue, irritability, insomnia, concentration difficulty, or memory difficulty.

26. For decades, the scientific community has known that repetitive head trauma can lead to permanent and debilitating neurological impairments, including Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy ("CTE").

27. Defendant has known or should have known for many years that CTE is found in athletes, including football players and boxers, with a history of repetitive head trauma. Published papers, easily accessible to Defendant, have shown that this condition is prevalent in boxers and retired professional football players who have a history of head injuries. The changes in the brain begin when the brain is subjected to repetitive trauma, but symptoms may not appear until months, years, or even decades after the last traumatic impact or the end of athletic involvement.

28. In 1928, pathologist Harrison Martland first described the link between repetitive head trauma and degenerative brain disease as the "punch drunk syndrome" in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

29. In 1934, Dr. Harry Parker published a study confirming Martland's findings and argued that neurological degeneration in boxers was based on the volume of brain trauma sustained. He further opined, "the frequency of occurrence of conditions of this kind as reported by...people who followed the profession of pugilism makes it seem very likely that [the patients'] profession led to their ultimate disablement...."

30. On December 29, 1937, at the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the American Football Coaches Association, the football community acknowledged its keen awareness of the serious risks of concussions, and the necessity of removing an individual from play if they have suffered a concussion:

During the past seven years the practice has been too prevalent of allowing players to continue playing after a concussion. Again this year this is true....Sports demanding personal contact should be eliminated after an individual has suffered one concussion.

31. In 1937, J.A. Millspaugh introduced the term *dementia pugilistica* to describe the syndrome characterized by motor deficits and mental confusion in boxers. Millspaugh also noted that the disease is likely not limited to boxers but could extend to other sports where repetitive brain trauma is present: “The mental unbalance more commonly encountered among pugilists is also observed among other sports representatives who sustain considerable head trauma.” He further opined, “[r]epeat and frequent concussions...are, to say the least, not conducive to stabilized mental equilibrium.”

32. In 1949, British neurologist Macdonald Critchley published the first of two important studies on head trauma in boxers. In *Punch Drunk Syndrome: The Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy of Boxers*, Critchley described the latent effects of repetitive brain trauma, explaining that the condition was generally not observable until a number of years had passed since the onset of boxing. In 1957, Critchley published an article in the *British Medical Journal* and described the symptoms of “chronic progressive traumatic encephalopathy” to include “progressive slowing of speech and thoughts...slowness of movement, and tremors.” Critchley further noted that brain damage produced by repetitive trauma could lead to personality changes, and that the effects of chronic head trauma are dependent on the volume of impacts as well as the magnitude of those events.

33. Over the next several decades, the evidence of the link between repetitive head trauma and neurological diseases was overwhelmingly clear. Numerous studies were published in medical journals including the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Neurology*, *Lancet*, the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Physician and Sports Medicine* warning of the dangers of single concussions, multiple concussions, and/or football-related head trauma from multiple concussions. These studies collectively established:

repetitive head trauma in contact sports, including boxing and football, has potential dangerous long-term effects on brain function;

encephalopathy is caused in boxers, steeplechasers and football players by repeated sub-concussive and concussive blows to the head;

acceleration and rapid decelerations of the head that results in brief loss of consciousness in primates also results in a tearing of the axons (brain cells) within the brainstem;

immediate retrograde amnesia occurs following concussions;

mild head injury requires recovery time without risk of subjection to further injury;

a football player who suffers a concussion requires significant rest before being subjected to further contact; and,

minor head trauma can lead to neuropathological and neurophysiological alterations, including neuronal damage, reduced cerebral blood flow, altered brainstem evoked potentials and reduced speed of information processing.

34. Although CTE has been discussed widely in the medical literature for more than eight decades, it was not until 2002 that CTE was officially diagnosed post-mortem in professional football players. Upon information and belief, this late finding was due to the Defendant's and its agents' concerted effort to conceal the link between repetitive head trauma in football and neurological diseases. Since 2002, more than 90% of all former players that have been examined post-mortem exhibited pathological symptoms consistent with CTE. The leading

neuropathologist studying CTE, Dr. Ann McKee, believes that it is more likely than not that every single NFL player has some level of CTE.

35. The first professional football player to be diagnosed with CTE was a former Kansas City Chiefs player, Mike Webster. Webster played 17 years—his final two (1989 and 1990) with the Chiefs—in the NFL and tragically died only 12 years after retirement at the age of 50. During the latter part of his life, and while serving on Defendant’s coaching staff, Webster manifested progressive symptoms and signs of cognitive and neuropsychiatric impairment consistent with CTE.

36. Research suggests that CTE may have been the true primary cause of death for a majority of professional football players that died as a result of neurodegenerative diseases. Accordingly, it is likely that the rate of CTE in professional football players is significantly higher than once believed.

37. The clinical manifestations of CTE are quite variable but can include a number of stages. In the first stage, former players experience headaches, short-term memory difficulties, aggressive tendencies, depression and impulse control. In the second stage, as the disease progresses, the symptoms include depression, mood lability, explosivity, poor judgment, loss of attention and concentration, executive dysfunction, impulsivity, language difficulties and suicidal ideations. In the third stage, cognitive impairment becomes much more rampant, depression worsens and mood swings become more violent, severe memory loss occurs, and motor neuron disease may develop. Finally, in the fourth stage, full-blown encephalopathy sets in, causing severe memory loss with dementia, executive dysfunction, language difficulties, explosivity, paranoia, gait and increased suicidal ideations. In the latter stages of CTE, the symptoms are consistent with Parkinsonism and end-stage dementia.

38. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recently issued a warning letter—since the Defendant failed to do so—to all former NFL players that played at least five seasons during 1959 to 1988, stating: due to the exposure of repetitive mild traumatic brain injuries the “risk of dying with a brain or nervous system disorder was more than 3 times higher among players.” The warning letter went on to conclude that this study confirms a similar study that was done “years” ago. Further evidencing the campaign of deception and concealment, prior to the dissemination of this warning letter, a member of the NFL’s Head, Neck and Spine Committee sought to remove any mention of CTE.

39. To date, more than fifty-two former NFL players have been diagnosed post-mortem with CTE. In addition, at least eight living players have been diagnosed with CTE based on clinical evaluations and radioactive markers.

40. Despite the substantial body of independent scientific studies directly linking repetitive head trauma in football and neurological diseases, including CTE, Defendant never warned Plaintiffs and instead willfully misrepresented and/or concealed the risks.

41. As the purveyor of football in America, and as the leading expert in the field, Defendant owed a continuous duty to keep abreast of the scientific developments relating to brain trauma which its employees were regularly exposed, and it was required to notify, inform and educate Plaintiffs and the public of any potential long-term risks of repetitive head trauma.

42. The Defendant’s duty to warn was commensurate not only with its actual knowledge gained from its “research” and published studies but also with its constructive knowledge as measured by scientific literature and other available means of communication.

43. Upon information and belief, Defendant knew or should have known of the devastating nature and long-term effects of concussive and sub-concussive injuries long before

Plaintiffs were exposed to repetitive brain trauma. Defendant had or should have had knowledge of studies that demonstrated a positive link between repetitive head trauma and neurological diseases in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. During those decades, Defendant's knowledge about the hazards of repetitive head trauma continued to accumulate, yet Defendant failed to warn Plaintiffs about those hazards.

COUNT I
NEGLIGENCE

44. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 43 as if fully set forth herein.

45. Defendant had a common law duty, separate and independent of any CBA, to use ordinary care to make its work environment reasonably safe.

46. Defendant owed a non-delegable duty to maintain a safe working environment, a duty not to expose Plaintiffs to unreasonable risks of harm, a duty to warn employees about the existence of dangers, including latent neurologic diseases, of which they could not reasonably be expected to be aware, and a duty to exercise reasonable care so as not to expose its employees, including Plaintiffs, to unreasonable risk of injury.

47. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant failed to use due care under the circumstances, and was thereby negligent in the performance of its non-delegable duties.

48. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant by its respective active and passive negligence failed to exercise the standard of care and skill it was obligated to exercise by reason of its relationship with Plaintiffs, undertakings and assumption of a duty thereby causing, creating or permitting an increased risk of exposure to repetitive brain trauma, and thereby failing to properly safeguard and warn Plaintiffs.

49. Such negligence directly caused or directly contributed to cause Plaintiffs to suffer from severe and persistent headaches, post-concussion syndrome, depression, mood swings, explosivity, suicidal ideations, and, upon information and belief, CTE.

50. The conduct of Defendant as alleged herein was willful, wanton and/or in reckless disregard for the rights of Plaintiffs and punitive and exemplary damages should be assessed against Defendant.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray judgment against Defendant in excess of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000.00) for actual damages, punitive damages, for the costs of this action, and for such relief as the Court deems fair and reasonable.

COUNT II
NEGLIGENT MISREPRESENTATION

51. To the extent they are not inconsistent with the allegations in this Count, Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 50 as if fully set forth herein.

52. Defendant had a common law duty, separate and independent of any CBA, to use ordinary care to make its work environment reasonably safe.

53. Defendant owed a non-delegable duty to maintain a safe working environment, a duty not to expose Plaintiffs to unreasonable risks of harm, a duty to warn employees about the existence of dangers, including latent neurologic diseases, of which employees could not reasonably be expected to be aware, and a duty to exercise reasonable care so as not to expose Plaintiffs to unreasonable risk of injury.

54. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant and its agents represented to Plaintiffs that concussions are not a serious injury.

55. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant and its agents represented to Plaintiffs that there are no long-term effects of concussions in NFL athletes.

56. When Defendant and its agents made these representations to Plaintiffs, the representations were driven by profit motives so that Plaintiffs would continue to play unimpeded by the risks of latent neurological diseases.

57. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant failed to exercise reasonable care and competence when communicating this information, and as a result, the information presented to Plaintiffs was false and misleading.

58. Plaintiffs justifiably relied upon this information since Defendant was in a superior position of knowledge and Defendant could foresee that Plaintiffs would rely and intended that they do so.

59. Defendant's negligent misrepresentations directly caused or directly contributed to cause Plaintiffs to suffer from severe and persistent headaches, post-concussion syndrome, depression, mood swings, explosivity, suicidal ideations, and, upon information and belief, CTE.

60. The conduct of Defendant as alleged herein was willful, wanton and/or in reckless disregard for the rights of Plaintiff and punitive and exemplary damages should be assessed against the Defendant.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray judgment against Defendant in excess of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000.00) for actual damages, punitive damages, for the costs of this action, and for such relief as the Court deems fair and reasonable.

COUNT III
FRAUDULENT CONCEALMENT

61. To the extent they are not inconsistent with the allegations in this Count, Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 60 as if fully set forth herein.

62. At all relevant times hereto, Defendant was in a position of superior knowledge, which was not within the fair and reasonable reach of the Plaintiffs, nor would it have been discovered through the exercise of Plaintiffs' ordinary diligence.

63. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant knew that repetitive head trauma in football created a risk of neurological diseases.

64. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant was aware of, knew and understood the significance of the published medical literature dating from as early as the 1920s that there is a serious risk of short-term and long-term brain injury associated with repetitive head trauma in football, to which Plaintiffs were exposed.

65. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant had a duty, separate and independent of any CBA, to disclose and/or inform Plaintiffs about these risks.

66. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant knew that such information was material to Plaintiffs, and knew that Plaintiffs would rely upon it for accurate information.

67. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Defendant knowingly and fraudulently concealed from Plaintiffs the risks of repetitive head trauma, including the risk of latent brain disease, intending that Plaintiffs would rely upon such concealment.

68. Between August 31, 1987 and March 29, 1993, Plaintiffs relied upon the Defendant's inaccurate and misleading information.

69. Defendant's fraudulent concealment directly caused or directly contributed to cause Plaintiffs to suffer from severe and persistent headaches, post-concussion syndrome, depression, mood swings, explosivity, suicidal ideations, and, upon information and belief, CTE.

70. The conduct of Defendant as alleged herein was willful, wanton and/or in reckless disregard for the rights of Plaintiff and punitive and exemplary damages should be assessed against Defendant.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray judgment against Defendant in excess of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000.00) for actual damages, punitive damages, for the costs of this action, and for such relief as the Court deems fair and reasonable.

COUNT IV
LOSS OF CONSORTIUM

71. To the extent they are not inconsistent with the allegations in this Count, Plaintiffs-Spouses incorporate by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 70 as if fully set forth herein.

72. As a result of Defendant's misconduct as alleged herein, Defendant is liable to the Plaintiffs-Spouses.

73. As a direct and proximate result of the carelessness, negligence, and recklessness of Defendant and of the aforesaid injuries to their husbands, the Plaintiffs-Spouses have been damaged as follows:

- a. They have been and will continue to be deprived of the services, support, maintenance, guidance, companionship and comfort of their husbands;
- b. They have been and will continue to be required to spend money for medical care and household care for the treatment of their husbands; and

c. They have been and will continue to be deprived of the earnings of their husbands.

74. The conduct of the Defendant as alleged herein was willful, wanton and/or in reckless disregard for the rights of Plaintiffs-Spouses and punitive and exemplary damages should be assessed against Defendant.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs-Spouses pray for judgment against Defendant in excess of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000.00) for actual damages, punitive damages, for the costs of this action, and for such relief as the Court deems fair and reasonable.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiffs demand a trial by jury on all issues in this matter.

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