

Stabler Is Latest Big Name to Join NFL Concussion Lawsuits

by Anthony Caruso on August 16, 2012

Raiders quarterback Ken Stabler became the latest former NFL star to file a lawsuit against the league for head injuries he sustained during his career. There are now a total of 124 concussion lawsuits, representing a staggering 3,236 former NFL players.

Stabler, like his fellow plaintiffs, maintains that the NFL failed to warn players about the long-term effects of suffering multiple concussions. The players also allege that the league actively attempted to hide its own knowledge of the risks of repeated head injuries.

For the NFL, the number of lawsuits won't make a difference so long as it can convince a federal judge that the suits are meritless. Many sports attorneys expect the NFL to argue that the concussion lawsuits are preempted by the collective bargaining agreement.

While the NFL defends the concussion lawsuits in court, it is also working to revamp its public image by taking steps to improve player safety. In the wake of the suicide of Junior Seau, the league recently launched a new wellness program for current and retired players. One of the key features is a confidential mental health phone line, which is intended to help players and family members get professional help.

“There is no higher priority for the National Football League than the health and wellness of our players,” NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in an email announcing the program. “This service is here for you.”

While many call the new program a good first step, others question whether it will be able to reach players dealing with mental health issues. Just last month, O.J. Murdock, a 25-year-old wide receiver for the Tennessee Titans, tragically died of a self-inflicted gun shot. His suicide will likely only add fuel to the debate regarding whether concussions and other brain injuries may be causing mental health issues in football players.