

NFLPA Investigates Buccaneers on MRSA Issue

by Anthony Caruso on September 11, 2013

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers may be in hot water over whether the team communicated the outbreak of MRSA - a dangerous bacteria resistant to penicillin-type treatment - to its players in a timely fashion.

The National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) is investigating the team for potential negligence, the findings of which could allow it to sue the team for Article 50 violations under the collective bargaining agreement. Tampa Bay Buccaneers kicker Lawrence Tynes and guard Carl Nicks contracted the MRSA virus.

Nicks was placed on the Buccaneer's injured list - which will give him full benefits and pension credits - but Tynes is listed on the non-football injury list, which precludes him from receiving credits toward an accrued season under sports law while he fights the potentially fatal disease, according to CBS Sports. The team is asserting that Tynes contracted a different strain of the virus outside of the team's facility. However, the union believes that a team employee is the first patient to introduce the virus to the team facility, a possibility the NFLPA says the team failed to mention on its medical report.

Tampa Bay general manager Mark Dominik asserted that the team acted responsibly once it discovered the outbreak and responded on a timely manner to protect the health and safety of its players.

"Our players were informed of the situation and we sought the advice of experts, including the NFL's medical advisor, who provided counsel and approved of our comprehensive measures including the treatment of our practice facility," said Dominik.

As Tynes' career may be in jeopardy because he is not a central player for the Buccaneers, the union is considering filing an injury complaint against the team under the collective bargaining agreement. However, as the origin of the virus remains in contention, it may be difficult for the union to prove that the Tampa Bay team was negligent and tried to cover up the infection, which may be in turn affect Tynes' ability to take legal action.

These days, with much of the focus on on-field injuries, especially concussions, many people don't think about the implications such an event could have for the relationship between the NFL and the Players Association. Should Tynes pursue legal action against the league, this could open the flood gates for similar claims in the future.