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Sports

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Clay High player still in Ruby Memorial after suffering head injury at game Friday

by Justin D. Anderson
Daily Mail Capitol Reporter

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A Clay County High football player today remained in Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown, where he was rushed by medical helicopter after getting hit in the head during a game against Tyler Consolidated Friday night.

Luke Kleman, a junior, was dragging down a runner about a minute into the fourth quarter when another Clay player came in to assist and likely kneed Kleman in the side of the helmet, knocking him unconscious, said Philip Dobbins, Clay's principal.

"It must have hit him in the right spot," Dobbins said today.

A nurse at Ruby refused to provide any information on the boy's condition this morning.

Kleman is the son of Frank Kleman, head coach for the Panthers.

Dobbins said he spoke to the coach, who said his son was having seizures that prevented doctors from performing an MRI to properly diagnose the extent of the injuries.

Doctors were planning to run the test again today, Dobbins said.

"He was having problems sitting up," Dobbins said. "He sits up and it triggers seizure activity."

Dobbins said doctors found no broken bones or spinal cord injuries. They think he suffered a severe concussion, the principal said.

But initially it looked a lot worse.

"It didn't sound good because he was unresponsive for quite a long time on the field," Dobbins said.

After the hit, Kleman lay face down, unconscious and not breathing, Dobbins said.

A trainer rushed onto the field and turned the boy over after about thirty seconds and he started gasping for breath, Dobbins said.

The game, played at Tyler's home field near Sistersville, was delayed for about an hour while emergency crews tended to Kleman.

Dobbins said at some point during the wait for the medical helicopter, Kleman opened his eyes and was able to wiggle some of his fingers and toes.

Officials eventually called the game with Tyler leading Clay 54-15. It was the final game of the regular season for Clay.

Coach Kleman initially didn't know that it was his son lying there on the field, Dobbins said. The coach told Dobbins it was the scariest injury he'd seen in all his years of coaching.

Dobbins said Kleman had just scored a touchdown and a two-point conversion a few plays before he was injured. Kleman is a wide receiver and defensive back for the Panthers. Dobbins thinks he's 16 years old.

Players from both teams gathered in one of the end zones to pray for Kleman, Dobbins said. School officials at Tyler provided the visiting students with meals.

Kleman also plays on Clay's basketball team, Dobbins said.

"He's a real good student," Dobbins said. "Never in trouble. Very respectful. He's a good athlete. He's got a lot of natural ability."

Dobbins considered Kleman the best receiver on the team. Dobbins said the boy has

scored a few touchdowns this season.

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 Did the ambulance crews actually wait an HOUR for a helicopter? Why didnt they put him in an ambulance and drive him to the emergency room at Sistersville General and wait for the helicopter there? If this boy is permanantly injured, his parents and he should consider suing the ambulance service for allowing him to lay on the field that long. He should have been in the ER with a doctor not on a field with a bunch of ambulance folks and atheletic trainers. He is in our prayers. Can someone please take steps to ensure ambulance providers stop this nonsense? I watch them sit on the interstate 20 minutes from a hospital in Kanawha and Putnam Counties and wait 30+ minutes for a helicopter. Just put me in the back of the ambulance and take me to the hospital.

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 My thoughts and prayers go out to this young man and his family.

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