

Football's a dangerous game, especially for fans

LAST WEEK I had dinner with a physician from Hershey Medical Center of the Pennsylvania State University.

Since the Penn State Nittany Lions were ranked No. 1 in the country, the conversation quickly turned to football.

Have you gone to many football games this season? I asked.

"All of them," he replied. "I serve as the physician in charge of emergency medical services for all of our home football games."

"WHAT A 'sweet' job," I thought. "It must be nice — getting paid to watch football," I said.

"No such luck," he replied. "We've been too busy taking care of people in the stands to see much of the games."

"What kind of medical problems could you possibly have at a football game?" I naively asked.

"Plenty," he replied. "Each week we have bloody noses, muscle strains and sprains, cuts, abrasions and numerous upset stomachs. Some spectators become dizzy after standing up too quickly to watch an exciting play. One student fell from the stands and broke her ankle."

The physician's stories continued. "Stadium medicine," he called it.

"DURING HOT and humid weather (e.g., September football), we sometimes had 10 or 15 episodes of fainting a game. Many of these spectators were drinking beer or wine. On the other hand, during this time of the year, frostbite and hypothermia



fitness
Barry Franklin

(low body temperature) are common.

"One student entered our emergency medical booth with an ice pick lodged in his stomach! It seems that he was participating in a pre-game party outside the stadium and was chopping a block of ice in front of him. Although he had had a few beers, he felt he was doing well until he suddenly missed the ice."

"Have you had any heart attacks this season?" I asked.

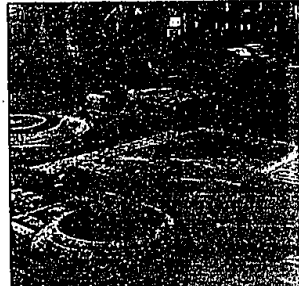
The physician smiled. "We generally have one or two a game," he replied. "Our record this year was three in one game."

Barry Franklin, Ph.D., is director of cardiac rehabilitation and exercise laboratories, William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, and assistant professor of physiology, Wayne State University School of Medicine.

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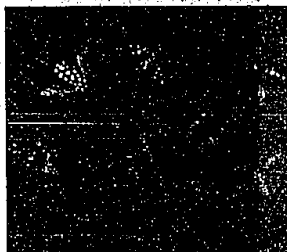
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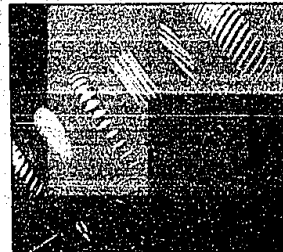
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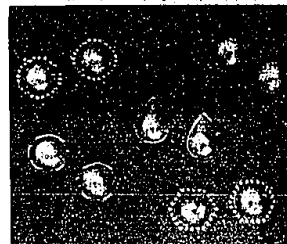
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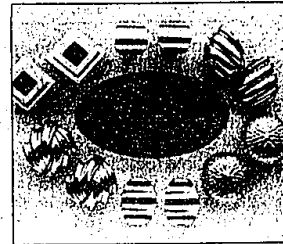
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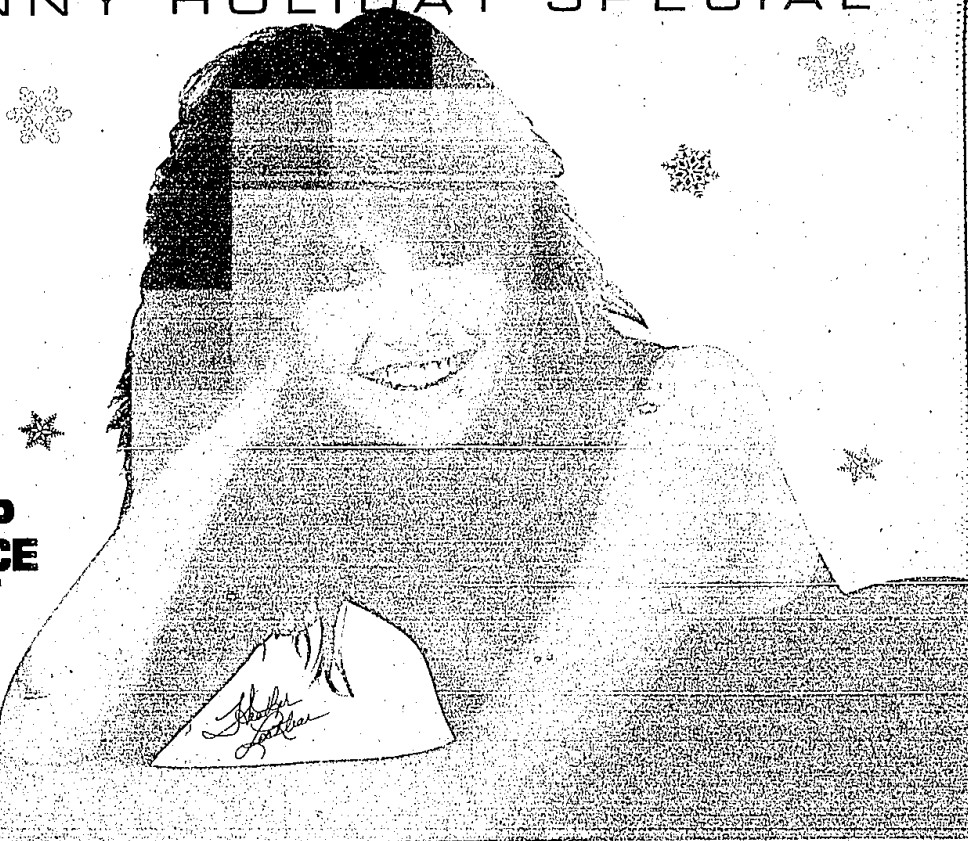
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