

Owens plagued with hurts since joining Lions

Injured fullback ponders pro football future

By RICHARD GOLD

Injuries are part of sports, both amateur and professional. They are as commonplace as beer and hotdogs at a baseball game.

Injuries are the dark side of athletics, the spoils of careers and the destroyers of potential greatness. To the professional athlete, they are an anathema, a dreaded curse to be avoided. They cut off incomes and they can mar for life.

Steve Owens, the Detroit Lions' fullback, is one athlete who has suffered the physical and psychological ravages of injuries. He has been plagued with serious injury throughout his five years with the Lions.

Drafted in the first round in 1970, he was the great backfield hope for the Lions; the big punishing fullback who could get the short yards on crucial third downs.

Owens had the credentials. In 1969, he won the Heisman Trophy, symbol of the best player in college football. He had set many school, conference

and national records at Oklahoma University. He had 17 straight 100-yard plus games and had accumulated more than 3,800 yards at OU. He scored 56 touchdowns in his three years at Oklahoma, 23 in his senior year alone. In the same season he gained more than 1,500 yards.

SINCE COMING to the Lions, however, Owens has had only one injury-free season. That was 1971 when he became the first and only Lion to top the 1,000-yard rushing mark. He scored eight touchdowns that season and carried the ball 246 times for a 4.2-yard average.

This month, Owens is at a different OU, Oakland University, where he is working out with the Lions.

He has his work cut out for him. Last year in November, following the longest rush from scrimmage in his entire professional career, he severely injured his left knee, tearing cartilage, ligaments and muscles.

All winter long, Owens has been working out at his Troy home and in

Detroit, strengthening his leg.

"I've been working hard all winter, doing rehabilitation exercises. When they took the cast off the leg it was depressing to see how much the muscles had atrophied," Owens said.

"I'm taking it one year at a time now. I'll retire when I feel I can't compete. I know I've had problems

physically, but I'm young—only 22—and I think I can overcome them."

OWENS SAID he is prepared to quit now if he can't make the grade. "I have enough memories from football right now that if I had to I could retire. I've had my moments."

Perhaps the roughest part of an injury is the rehabilitation program—

the long lonely hours with the weights trying to straighten the weakened

muscles and joints. He admitted it. "The rehab and therapy were quite an ordeal."

The body, however, is not the only part that needs attention, according to Owens.

"The biggest thing is getting my confidence back," he said. "Your mind can be your biggest asset or liability. A good mental outlook can be a tremendous help and right now I have

it in my mind to do what I have to do get ready."

A civic leader as well as an athlete, Owens chaired the 1975 Detroit Muscular Dystrophy Association fund drive.

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Owens lives in Troy with his wife, Barbara, and their two sons, Blake and Michael Joseph.

A two-year resident of Troy, he finds the community an agreeable place to live. "I like the area and I have great neighbors," he said.

Ace comes easy for area woman

When it comes to golf, Mrs. Elmer Lang of Southfield isn't the type to wait around for good things to happen to her.

Mrs. Lang took up golf for the first time this summer. She'd played only eight times before she accomplished something which every golfer dreams of. She recorded a hole in one last week at Birmingham's Lincoln Hills Golf Course.

She used her driver to ace Lincoln Hills' second hole, a 185-yard par three test. Needless to say, the accomplishment created quite a stir around the public course.

"The woman I was playing with, my partner, really went bananas," Mrs. Lang said. "She was more excited than I was. When we got back to the clubhouse, several men stood up and cheered when we walked in. I thought that was so nice of them. I offered to buy them coffee, but they refused."

When Mrs. Lang decided to take up golf, she signed up for what she thought were lessons offered by the Birmingham YMCA. However, the lessons turned out to be a summer golf league. But she decided to stick around anyway. And why not? With a lot like her, who needs lessons?

IN CONTRAST to Mrs. Lang, Jack Rose, 78, had been playing golf for more than 30 years without ever coming close to a hole in one—until last Saturday (Aug. 16).

That's when Rose, also a Southfield resident, aced the 15th hole at Shenandoah Country Club in West Bloomfield Township. He used a four wood on the par three, 175-yard link.

"Naturally I was a bit excited," Rose said. "It happens just once in a lifetime, and I'd gone all those years without making one. What did I do to celebrate? Nothing. I didn't even buy a round of drinks at the clubhouse. It was kind of late and almost everybody had gone home."

But Rose and his wife, Blanche, had a treat in store that night. They were taken out to dinner at Win Schuler's Restaurant in West Bloomfield by their daughter and her husband—presumably to celebrate a good day on the links.

Scott Towne, a 17-year-old Farmington golfer, waited five years for his first hole in one, but it finally came last week on the 15th hole at Kensington Park Golf Course. Towne used a four iron on the 175-yard par three hole. He recorded a score of 45 for nine holes.

Youngest champion ever at Plum Hollow tourney

Cindy Vollmer, a 21-year-old college student from Birmingham, won the championship flight of the Plum Hollow Golf Club Ladies Club Championship held Aug. 13-15.

Miss Vollmer, who became the youngest ladies champion in Plum Hollow's history, shot rounds of 82, 82, 80 for a 244 total over the 6,250-yard, par-75 course. Miss Vollmer, who attends Michigan State University, was also

medalist for the tournament. Defending champion Mrs. Betty Rex of Franklin finished three strokes back to take runner-up honors in the championship flight.

Mrs. Carol Gladfelter of Birmingham defeated Mrs. Jean Denkins of Southfield in a playoff which ended first-flight honors. Mrs. Leahda Marshall won the third flight, and Mrs. Elsie Rhaesa won the fourth flight.

Doctor wins club tourney

Dr. Harold Fromhart of Farmington won the championship flight of the Farmington Country Club's championship tournament last week. Fromhart shot rounds of 79, 75 and 79 for a 232 total on the par-72, 6,877-yard course.

Al Sielovan of South Lyon was runner up in the championship flight with rounds of 78, 80 and 76. Craig Hartle, 19, of West Bloomfield, won the junior championship with a 226 total in the 54-hole tournament. Hartle, a college student at the University of South Florida, shot rounds of 82, 79 and 66. George Stroh was runner-up with a 222 total, which included rounds of 76, 79 and 78. Stroh, 14, will enter the ninth grade at Dunckel Junior High School in Farmington Hills.

Southfield grad is WSU hopeful

Al Hartley, a 1974 graduate of Southfield High School, is one candidate for a tackle spot on Wayne State University's football team. Coach Dick Lowry's WSU team begins pre-season football drills on Thursday (Aug. 21) with the opening game set for Sept. 6 at home against Grand Valley State.

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