

Buffalo Bills football player Damar Hamlin in critical condition after heart stops mid-game

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During Monday night's nationally televised National Football League (NFL) game between the Cincinnati Bengals and the Buffalo Bills, Damar Hamlin, the safety for the Bills, collapsed after his heart stopped during the first quarter.

Hamlin had just made a tackle on a Bengals player and received a hard blow to his chest. He stood up immediately following the play, but collapsed seconds later. Medical staff responded quickly and administered CPR, which apparently succeeded in restarting his heart.

Hamlin was removed from the field by stretcher and rushed to the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, where he remains in the Intensive Care Unit in critical condition. Reports Tuesday night from family members at the hospital depicted a grim situation for the 24-year-old athlete.

An uncle, Dorrian Glenn, who visited Hamlin at the hospital told the press that Damar has required resuscitation at least twice and has been in a state of sedation. Glenn added that for now Hamlin had to remain on his stomach so as to drain blood from his lungs, and that he was able to breathe only with the assistance of a ventilator.

While a full and detailed medical report on Hamlin has yet to be given to the public, the fact that he suffered a severe heart episode should be of great concern for all young athletes. For one thing, it has been medically established that COVID-19 infections can lead to a higher risk of myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart, especially among young men.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the condition has become increasingly common in college athletes. In at least one case, a 20-year-old college football player, Jamain Stephens, died from myocarditis, which had

developed after he had been infected with COVID-19.

In a formal statement, Hamlin's family wrote: "On behalf of our family, we want to express our sincere gratitude for the love and support shown to Damar during this challenging time. We are deeply moved by the prayers, kind words, and donations from fans around the country."

The statement extended special thanks to the medical staff and first responders who are caring for Hamlin.

After Hamlin collapsed on the field, his teammates and opponents alike could be seen struggling to hold back tears, fearing that they had just witnessed a fellow athlete die. Only minutes afterward, top officials in the NFL informed the teams that they had five minutes to "warm up" and continue the game.

The players responded by refusing to continue the game, instead gathering on the field and kneeling together in a moment of prayer. Shortly afterwards, the NFL officially suspended the game and ended the live TV broadcast.

In a desperate attempt to save face, the NFL is now denying that it ever told players they had to continue playing. However, at least one ESPN reporter, Joe Buck, is insisting he was told by an NFL official that players were expected to be back on the field within five minutes of Hamlin being carried off on a stretcher.

An estimated 14 million people watched Hamlin collapse. Once it became clear that the players had no intention of resuming the game while Hamlin's survival was in question, the League conceded. It feared the repercussions of what could have turned into an angry protest by the players, broadcast into millions of homes, against any attempt to force them to resume play.

On Tuesday, the NFL issued a statement saying that the Bills-Bengals game would not be resumed this

week and that no decision had been made as to whether it would be rescheduled for a later date. The statement went on to say, however, that the games scheduled for next week would go ahead as planned, and that the Bills would be expected to play the New England Patriots on Sunday.

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There will be immense pressure from the billionaire team owners to reschedule the Bengals-Bills game. They will seek to minimize lost revenue from the halting of Monday's game. Moreover, failure to replay the game could impact the placement of the Bills in the extremely lucrative post-season playoffs.

On average, an NFL team takes in over \$10 million per game just from ticket sales. On top of that, owners take home massive profits from TV broadcasting rights and advertising. In 2021, across all teams, the NFL generated a combined \$17 billion.

In the immediate aftermath of Monday's tragedy, there has been an outpouring of support for the young athlete and his family. There have been thousands of heartfelt posts on social media. Many have expressed outrage at the NFL for even considering making the players continue the game. Others have expressed horror that such a deadly incident could occur in professional football, the most popular sport in the US.

The National Football League Players Association (NFLPA), the official union of the players, said in a brief statement on Tuesday: "Our focus remains on the health of our brother, Damar Hamlin. We continue to be in touch with the clubs and the NFL to ensure that Bills and Bengals players have every resource available to aid and support them during this time."

It is unlikely that the NFLPA will take any action against the NFL. Historically, the role of the NFLPA, which is part of the AFL-CIO, has been to help the NFL save face and keep protests from players hidden from public view. It has never made any attempt to hold team owners or NFL officials responsible for the physical and mental injuries sustained by players.

Hamlin's near-fatal experience is the second high-profile injury this year in the NFL. The first was the seizure suffered by Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa in late September, which occurred after he was allowed to return to action despite having suffered

a concussion.

The incident was a display of blatant negligence. Independent medical experts who observed Tagovailoa's injury have gone on record saying that he has already likely sustained irreversible brain trauma.

Since then, Tagovailoa was again cleared to return to the field by the NFL. But in a Christmas Day game against the Green Bay Packers, he suffered yet another head trauma. In this most recent instance, he was not removed from play, despite signs that the injury had a clear impact on his performance. It was not until the next day that Tagovailoa self-reported to the team's medical staff that he had again been placed in the concussion protocol.



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