

FAN HURT BY BAT AT FENWAY EXPECTED TO SURVIVE

A fan hit by a broken bat at Fenway Park is expected to survive after suffering life-threatening injuries during a game between the Oakland Athletics and Boston Red Sox.

Officer Rachel McGuire said Saturday that the woman is recovering. Tonya Carpenter was struck in the head by the broken bat of Oakland's Brett Lawrie on Friday night. Carpenter is now in serious condition, her family said in a statement.

Friday night's game was halted in the second inning as emergency crews tended to a bloodied Carpenter and wheeled her off the field on a stretcher. Lawrie broke his bat on a grounder and part of it hurtled a few rows into the seats between the backstop and Oakland's dugout on the third base side.

Alex Merlis, of Brookline, Massachusetts, said he was sitting in the row behind the woman when the broken bat flew into the stands.

"It was violent," he said of the impact to her forehead and top of her head. "She bled a lot. A lot. I don't think I've ever seen anything like that."



TIGER SHOOTS CAREER-WORST 85 AT MEMORIAL

Tiger Woods hit a new low with a career high.

Right when it looked as though Woods was slowly making some semblance of progress, he posted an 85 on Saturday at the Memorial for the worst score of his career. It was three shots higher than the 82 he shot in the second round of the Phoenix Open in January, which led to him taking a two-month break from competition until he could get his game in order.

Woods ended his front nine with back-to-back double bogeys for a 42. Needing a par on the 18th hole to avoid his worst score, he hooked his tee shot into the water, flubbed two chips from short of the green and took a quadruple-bogey 8. It was his third round in the 80s as a pro.

Woods declined interview requests. He was in last place, meaning he would play as a single Sunday for the first time in his career.



American Pharoah with jockey Victor Espinoza crosses the finish line to win the Belmont Stakes on Saturday in Elmont, N.Y. American Pharoah is the first horse to win the Triple Crown since Affirmed won it in 1978.

BELMONT STAKES

Crowning moment
American Pharoah wins Triple Crown

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Finally, a Triple Crown winner, and after 37 years of waiting, this one was never in doubt.

American Pharoah led all the way to win the Belmont Stakes by 5 1/2 lengths on Saturday, becoming the first horse since 1978 to sweep the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes — one of the sporting world's rarest feats.

"Wow! Wow!" jockey Victor Espinoza said moments after crossing the finish line. "I can only tell you it just an amazing thing!"

The bay colt with the unusually short tail easily defeated seven rivals in the grueling 1 1/2-mile race, covering the distance in 2:26.65 — sixth-fastest in Belmont history — to end the longest stretch without



a Triple Crown champion in history.

"That little horse, he deserved it," trainer Bob Baffert said. "He's the one that did it. We were basically just passengers."

American Pharoah is the 12th horse and first since Affirmed in 1978 to win three races on

— BELMONT | **C2**

ROCKY ROAD TO GRADUATION
The life of Prince

Rocky senior's spirit transcends tumultuous year

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Prince Gbeddeh doesn't shy from showing the deep scars that run up and down his left leg, or telling the story of how they got there.

Nine months ago, the Rock Island High School senior was in the throes of a terrifying battle, fighting for his life in a Peoria hospital after complications from a freak knee injury during a football game nearly resulted in the amputation of his left leg and caused his kidneys and lungs to malfunction.

After multiple surgeries, the physical remnants of Gbeddeh's tumultuous ordeal are still very visible and striking.

Gbeddeh's magnetic smile fades for a moment as he takes off his supportive brace and removes the protective sleeve that covers his leg to reveal the damage. The eye is immediately drawn to his inner calf, once bulging from his muscular frame but now sunken inward after part of the mass of tissue died as a result of the trauma of his injury. He's uncertain how much of the muscle strength he can regain through rehab and knows it will never be like it was before.

"I don't know if it's going to come back. But at least I have my foot," Gbeddeh said as the smile reappeared across his face.

The injury has taken away Gbeddeh's explosive athletic ability, but his charismatic personality and ever-positive attitude have remained and he's become an inspiration to those who have aided in and witnessed his recovery.

He'll never again play football, a game he grew to love in the years following his arrival to the United States with his mother and four siblings from war-torn West Africa. He didn't receive the scholarship offer he was hoping to earn when the season began. Despite his loss, Gbeddeh displays no bitterness about what he's been through.



Rock Island High School senior Prince Gbeddeh poses at the school's football stadium on Thursday. Just over nine months after complications from a dislocated knee nearly resulted in the amputation of his left leg, Gbeddeh will walk across the stage under his own power to receive his high school diploma at Rock Island's commencement ceremony.

ONLINE

Rock Island's Prince Gbeddeh discusses his injury and surgeries in a video at qctimes.com.

On the verge of his high school graduation, the vivacious 18-year-old speaks with remarkable maturity as he discusses how the hardships he and his family have endured have helped mold him over the past year.

"It's life experience. It can be hard to take in, but things happen and you just have to learn from them and move on," he said. "I learned a lot through the things I went through. Just being strong mentally and spiritually, I've learned a lot."

Bryan Stortz was Gbeddeh's football coach and mentor before the injury. Now, he's a father figure to Gbeddeh and considers his former player part of his own family after helping him along his arduous road to recovery.

Today at Rock Island's commencement ceremony at the iWireless Center in Moline, Stortz and those throughout the community who have helped lift Gbeddeh up since he fell to the ground in agony in



Rock Island High School senior Prince Gbeddeh reveals the deep scars from a surgery to correct complications from a knee injury suffered in the Rocks' season-opening football game on Aug. 29, 2014.



Matthew Putney, WATERLOO COURIER
Central DeWitt's Wade Sandry falls to the field after Cedar Rapids Xavier scores the winning goal in the second overtime in the Class 2A state championship game Saturday in Des Moines.

C.R. XAVIER 1, CENTRAL DEWITT 0 (OT)
Xavier outlasts Central DeWitt in OT for title

Duball's goal in double overtime ends Sabers' dreams of state title

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DES MOINES — Just six years ago, the only postseason victory in the Central DeWitt boys soccer program's history was a forfeit.

Suffice to say, the expectations have been raised.

A season after making the state tournament for the first time, the Sabers made another quantum leap this spring reaching the Class 2A state championship match.

The storybook ending, though, will have to wait at least another year.

Cedar Rapids Xavier sophomore Luke Duball maneuvered past two defenders inside the 18-yard box and rifled a left-footed shot past a diving Justin Schwenen for the golden goal in the 93rd minute to send the Saints to a 1-0 double-overtime triumph Saturday at Cownie Soccer Park.

"We literally put it all on the line," Schwenen said. "I don't think anyone has any ounce of energy left in them. Nobody wasted anything out there. They gave it everything."

Central DeWitt finished the season with a school-record 19 victories versus two defeats, became the first Iowa Quad-City boys soccer team to play in a state championship match in a decade and earned a piece of hardware for the school trophy case.

"We showed true fight, true spirit," coach Eduardo Garza said. "When you overcome adversity and show who you really are, I couldn't pick a better team to coach."

"A lot of people had doubts against a powerhouse like Xavier, but I will say that we made them work for that championship!"

Central DeWitt striker Ferre Devos, who came into the state tournament with a team-high 30 goals, injured his left hamstring in the 22nd minute and never returned.

About 90 seconds after his departure, the Sabers thought they had broken through

— SOCCER | **C5**

GBEDDEH

From C1

the first football game of the season will cheer as he walks across the stage under his own power — no wheelchair, no walker, no crutches — to receive his high school diploma.

“It’ll be really symbolic of how far he’s come and the hurdles he’s had to overcome, not just with his football injury, but all of the adversity that he’s had to face,” Stortz said.

“We tend to focus on the negative side of things in those situations where he was able to see the positives of it, and it was amazing. It was kind of one of those things where you step back and say, ‘Is this really an 18-year-old who is saying and doing these things in this type of situation?’ Sometimes you learn from kids more in those situations than you feel you’re teaching them.”

Tough times in Africa

There was upheaval in Gbeddeh’s life even before he left his mother’s womb.

His family comes from the West African nation of Liberia, a poverty-stricken land ravaged by a pair of bloody civil wars that resulted in the death of more than 250,000 people between 1989 and 2003.

Martina Gbeleh lost her parents and the father of her two youngest children in the war. She was seven months pregnant with Prince when she and her four small children fled through the forest and crossed Liberia’s southern border into Ivory Coast in an attempt to preserve what family she had left.

Born severely bow-legged, Martina’s mobility was hindered but she completed the harrowing journey across the border with her children and gave birth to Prince.

The new land, however, was not a safe haven from the violence. Ivory Coast was embroiled in its own uprising and civil war broke out in 2002. With lax or nonexistent law enforcement, rebel forces had free rein throughout the region.

“You see stuff that you’re not supposed to see as a kid,” said Gbeddeh, who spent his first eight years of life in West Africa. “Rebels, they’d come to your house and do whatever they wanted to do because they had guns. It was scary.

“You’d know when they’d come because they’d start singing and yelling. When they come, the kids usually hide. Your mom would tell you to go hide so they wouldn’t do anything to you and your parents would just stand there in the doorway and talk to them and hopefully nothing would go wrong.”

Outside of the threat of violence, life remained difficult, though Gbeddeh, his mother and his siblings — Bankie, Junior, Helen and Redemer — made the best of their circumstances.

Gbeddeh said the family lived in a village on the Atlantic coast in a mud hut and had no electricity or running water. The children attended school, but he said at the age of 6 or 7 most kids from the area were expected to contribute in any way they could financially. The youngest ones would go into the forest and dig up minerals out of the dirt or collect firewood to peddle. His oldest brother would go out fishing and bring back his catch for his mother to cook and sell.

Around 2004, the family was presented with an opportunity for a new life where they knew they would be safer — the United States.

“It was like winning a lottery. Everyone had a chance to come,” Gbeddeh said. “You’d tell your story about what happened to you during the war and if it sounded good, you could come.

“Some people thought (the offer) was a joke, but Mom said she’d take opportunity and then it got really serious and they did an interview with her and they said we could go.”



Louis Brems, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Rock Island’s Prince Gbeddeh brings down Moline’s Ever Avila during a 2013 Western Big Six football game at Browning Field. Gbeddeh was expected to be a prominent two-way player for the Rocks his senior season but suffered a career-ending injury in the first game of the year.

Making a new home

Gbeddeh crossed the Atlantic in his first flight in an airplane and saw the Statue of Liberty upon arriving in his new country.

From New York, the family went to Erie, Pa., where they spent about two years and adapted to life in America. They heard of good jobs and a growing Liberian community within the Quad-Cities and moved to Rock Island in 2008. The employment opportunities, however, weren’t as plentiful as they had anticipated due to layoffs at local manufacturing plants.

Gbeddeh was in sixth grade and didn’t have to worry about finding work like some of his older siblings, who are all now in their early to late 20s. He had an unusual name and a background unlike most of his new peers, but his sense of humor and outgoing demeanor helped him quickly make friends of all ages and leave a strong impression on those who have become part of his wide circle as he’s grown up.

“I liked to joke around and tell people I’m the Prince of Africa. I just came here to get an education and am going back ...” he recalled with a laugh.

“This is how I was made. I usually have a good relationship with a whole lot of people. Even if we don’t have a lot of stuff in common, we’re all human, so we have that in common.”

Stortz added, “If you’ve ever met him and you’ve listened to him talk and seen him smile, he’s electric.”

Sports entered the equation when Gbeddeh reached junior high. He played soccer back in West Africa, but when it came time to pick a sport in school he went against the grain.

“All the Liberians (at Rock Island) were like, ‘You gotta play soccer, you gotta play soccer,’” Gbeddeh said. “So that got a little bit annoying and I said I’m not going to play soccer, I’m going to play football.”

Despite the reservations of his mother, Gbeddeh was allowed to play football and his coaches utilized his athleticism at just about every backfield position. He was good. He loved the physicality. He also got hurt, breaking his radius in the eighth grade. Still, his mother realized he had a passion and talent for football, and let him continue to play.

During his junior year, when he began seeing consistent playing time on the varsity as a running back

and strong safety, Gbeddeh balanced football and studies with a pair of part-time jobs at Burger King and Hy-Vee so he could pay for his own needs and help provide for his mother, who is unable to work due to her disability.

Stortz’s first year at Rock Island was Gbeddeh’s sophomore season. As time went on, Stortz found Gbeddeh wasn’t just athletically gifted. He also had a unique and engaging personality that came through as the two shared stories and conversations in Stortz’s office.

“It was one of those types of relationships that you hope to build with all your players,” Stortz said. “He would come down during his lunch or study hall or whatever and we’d talk about anything. Not even just football, but life and different things going on with him. There were other times where he’d come early or stay late after practice and talk to coaches. He was interested more about the people part of it than he was about playing.”

Everything was coming together for Gbeddeh for his senior year. Well respected by his teammates, he was chosen as a captain and proudly took on the new responsibilities. He was also the top returning rusher and expected to be one of the main ball carriers.

In the first game of the season, it was all taken away.

A tragic turn

Lightning flashed in the sky over Peoria Stadium on the night of Aug. 29, causing two delays during the Rocks’ season opener against Peoria Manual.

Gbeddeh had been preparing all summer for this moment, but ominous thoughts had crept into his mind.

“The game started and I kind of knew I was going to get hurt for some reason,” Gbeddeh said. “I actually told our trainer.”

After gaining 33 yards on six carries with a touchdown, his premonition came true during a rush in the second quarter.

“I couldn’t run as fast as usual because the ground was slick and so I slid a little bit,” Gbeddeh said. “I kept running and then my leg twisted. I should have fell but I kept running and put pressure on my leg and that’s when I heard a pop. Then I fell and everyone on the other team fell on me and it twisted again. It was in like an L-shape.”

Gbeddeh was taken

by ambulance to Proctor Hospital in Peoria and soon transferred across town to OSF Saint Francis Medical Center where doctors found a ruptured artery suffered during his knee dislocation had resulted in internal bleeding that affected Gbeddeh’s kidneys and lungs. He was put on life support.

Stortz, who spent that night and the next two days with Gbeddeh, was told by doctors that this type of complication occurs only about one percent of the time.

Emergency surgery was performed and a vein from Gbeddeh’s inner right thigh was transplanted to his left leg in an attempt to restore blood flow and save the leg doctors had considered amputating. When he came to after surgery, the situation looked grim.

“I woke up and choked on my own fluid, like mucus and blood and everything. Then they knocked me out because my body was so weak. They knocked me out for a day,” he said.

Gbeddeh spent about five days in intensive care and three weeks total in the hospital. His mother was with him the whole time and had a bed in his room. Early on, Gbeddeh had a tube down his throat that alleviated the buildup of fluid in his lungs and, as he slowly gained strength, he communicated messages to his mom and other visitors through written notes.

The surgeons left open slits in Gbeddeh’s leg around his calf area to allow for the blood from the internal bleeding to drain. He said his muscles were visible through the openings. Once it was properly drained, he had a skin graft performed using skin from his upper right thigh to cover the openings in his lower left leg.

His siblings, all living in Rock Island, visited regularly to show their support and watched as his condition gradually improved.

“It was very emotional. Just thank the Lord. It was all up to God,” said his 21-year-old brother, Redemer. “He didn’t look good at the beginning, but as time progressed, he came out of it. He’s a very strong person. I knew he was going to make it.”

Rallying support

As word of Gbeddeh’s situation got out, an outpouring of support flooded in.

Stortz said at least 25 teams in Illinois gathered donations from players

“It’s life experience. It can be hard to take in, but things happen and you just have to learn from them and move on. I learned a lot through the things I went through. Just being strong mentally and spiritually, I’ve learned a lot.”

Rock Island’s Prince Gbeddeh

to send to Gbeddeh and he received dozens of cards containing inspiring messages.

Along with visits from his own teammates, the coach and players from the Peoria Manual team that Rock Island played the night of Gbeddeh’s injury also made multiple trips to see him in the hospital, brought him food and organized a significant fundraising effort.

“That actually boosted me up. It made me feel like I’m not in this on my own,” Gbeddeh said.

The first day Gbeddeh was well enough to leave the hospital in Peoria was Rock Island’s homecoming, three weeks after his injury. Prince was crowned king during an emotional coronation ceremony, then that night he was able to be with his team on the sidelines and watched from a wheelchair in his No. 30 jersey as his Rocks defeated United Township.

Gbeddeh’s mother stayed at his side in the hospital but was going through her own medical issues as the pain grew in her legs. After Gbeddeh returned to Rock Island, his mother went to a Chicago-area hospital for a long procedure to correct her bowed legs that involves breaking, twisting and resetting the bones in each leg. She’s had to stay at a rehab center near the hospital for months while she goes through the process.

Martina had surgery on her second leg about three weeks ago and Gbeddeh stayed with her for three days before he had to leave to undergo another surgery to repair the ligaments in his knee. The two call each other daily and check up on each other’s progress and Gbeddeh and his siblings have gone to visit her on weekends, sometimes getting hotel rooms paid for through donations from Martina’s church acquaintances.

“She’s a caring mom. She worries a lot, but in a good way. She just wants to make sure everything’s OK,” Gbeddeh said. “She was always asking me how I’m doing, how therapy was going. I was like, ‘No, don’t think about me too much. This is your time now!’”

With his mother away, Gbeddeh has needed others to fill in and help him out. Thanks to the relationships he forged in his past and his ability to bond with total strangers, there has been no shortage of volunteers.

“People want to extend themselves for Prince, but not because he expects it,” said Amy Hunter, who first got to know Gbeddeh from her time as assistant principal at Edison Junior High School.

Since retiring, Hunter has been a home-bound tutor and spent time aiding Gbeddeh with schoolwork, giving him rides to appointments and offering other assistance to the family. At the request of Martina, who has become a good friend, Hunter helped Gbeddeh file for his U.S. citizenship and on Friday she took him to the mall to buy clothes to wear at graduation.

Like others who help Gbeddeh, Hunter doesn’t expect any monetary compensation. Gbeddeh repays her in his own special way.

“I worked 38 years in the school systems. His loyalty and his attitude ... not everybody has that,” Hunter said. “He makes you a better person, and he and I have talked about that. I’ve said, ‘Prince, you’ve made me think about some things.’ So it’s a friendship both ways.”

Stortz has taken

Gbeddeh to at least a dozen appointments, he’s had Gbeddeh stay in his house with his wife and small children, and his parents and in-laws have even chipped in since they live in the Peoria area where he’s had surgeries and appointments.

Along with Stortz, many faculty members at Rock Island have also been exceedingly supportive, organizing fundraisers to help his family with their expenses and setting up a plan for Gbeddeh so he could catch up with his studies and graduate on time.

Though Gbeddeh’s mother won’t be able to attend today’s graduation ceremony because of her recovery, others who have helped him get to this point will be there to show their support.

“He’s going to have a lot of people clapping for him,” Hunter said.

The path ahead

A time that should be savored and celebrated has been marked by even more tragedy for Gbeddeh.

Late at night in the middle of his final week of school, he received a call and was informed that a close friend, Jarmena Bloway, had died after a seizure.

Bloway and Gbeddeh grew up together in Ivory Coast. Their families made the move to Erie and to Rock Island at the same time and, though Bloway moved away to Missouri in recent years, Gbeddeh still considered him a brother.

As with when he dealt with his injury, Gbeddeh relied on his faith to get him through the pain.

“God has a plan, so I left it all up to him. I don’t ask why. I know he has a purpose for everything, even with my friend that passed away,” Gbeddeh said, his voice starting to crack.

Gbeddeh believes his maturity stems from a religious awakening his sophomore year. His faith grew stronger through his struggles and now he has a goal of becoming an evangelist. His plan is to take a year off and study the Bible as he continues his recovery and then go to school to pursue his career.

The youngest of his family, Prince is known as the most outgoing. Redemer calls him “the goofy one.” He follows his own intuition, which tells him to converse with and be nice to everyone.

“I don’t really care how you look, how you talk and stuff like that,” Gbeddeh said. “I just like to talk to people to get to know them, see what processes they’ve gone through, how their life is different. I think the more you talk to people, the better you know about life, the better you know how to handle different situations because they can tell you what they went through.”

Thanks to his positive outlook, Gbeddeh survived a year in which everything could have fallen apart. As he moves on to the next phase of his life, those who know Gbeddeh well truly believe his endearing charm and caring personality will lead him to touch those going through their own unique struggles.

“I see him changing people’s lives,” Stortz said. “He’s a guy who’s found his passion. That’s where you look at the bright side of things and I think (his faith) wasn’t always part of his life but it really came to the forefront through this whole thing and he’s definitely got a plan in place.”

“He’s going to work to achieve that and be able to do some great things for people and, like I said, change lives.”