

# SPORTS

## Weight Questioned in Player's Death

300 pound linemen typical in football

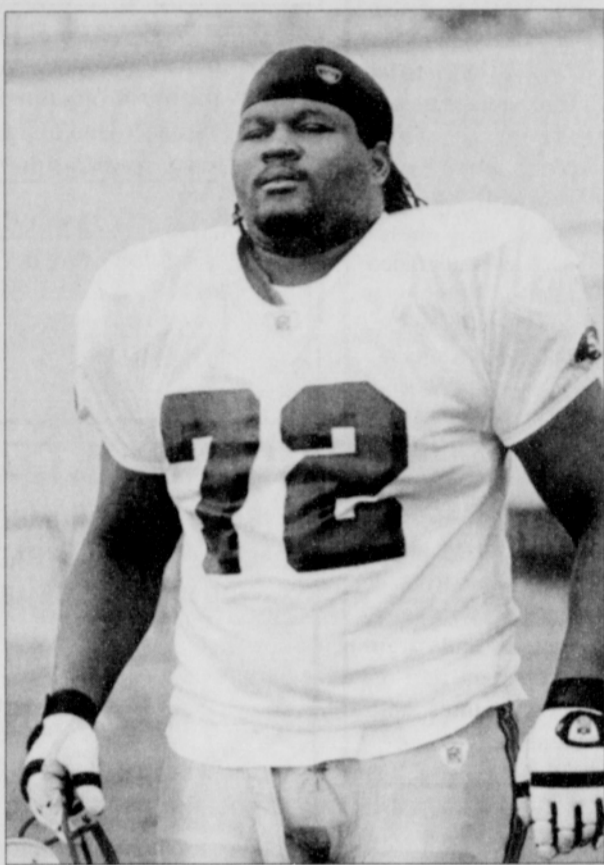
(AP) — The Denver coroner's office performed an autopsy on San Francisco 49ers player Thomas Herrion, but said no cause of death could be determined until toxicology tests were performed. The tests usually take about three to six weeks.

The 49ers backup offensive lineman collapsed near his locker a few minutes after Saturday night's game against the Denver Broncos ended. He was rushed to the hospital, and shortly afterward, pronounced dead at age 23.

Herrion's death once again shined a spotlight on the overall health of NFL players, especially the linemen, who routinely weigh in at more than 300 pounds.

It came four summers after offensive lineman Korey Stringer of the Minnesota Vikings died of heatstroke following a practice in steamy 90-degree weather.

Temperatures were nowhere near that Saturday night - mid-60s with 50 percent humidity when Herrion was on the field. And while heatstroke is still possible un-



Thomas Herrion

der such mild conditions, the notion that Herrion, or any football player, is in good enough shape to handle rigorous game conditions simply because he's a professional athlete is being questioned all over again.

The first-year guard, a longshot to make the final roster, was listed at 6-foot-3, 310 pounds, about average for an NFL lineman. But when measured on the body-mass index scale, which is a commonly accepted standard of fitness in the medical community, Herrion would be considered "severely obese."

And though obesity can't necessarily be blamed for the death - at least not at this point - one expert says it surely could have been a contributor.

"Yes, it could be totally unrelated to his weight, but the fact remains that he was 6-3 and he weighed 310 pounds and probably should have been 210 pounds," said Dr. Joyce Harp, a University of North Carolina endocrinologist who recently did a study calculating the BMIs of all NFL players and found that almost all players qualified as overweight or obese.

## Hall of Fame Coach Honored: Light shines on early NFL history

(AP) — Fritz Pollard, the first black head coach in NFL history, has been inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

Pollard's Aug. 7 induction shined a light on the early history of the NFL, when Pollard was an elusive running back and coach in a league reluctant to employ black players.

"For me, I didn't know that much about him until I started reading and hearing some things and then doing the research on it," said Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy, one of six black head coaches in the league today. "In the pre-integration of the game, I think it's interesting that he not only played the game but coached it."

Frederick Douglass Pollard, named for the famous black abolitionist, stood 5-foot-9 and 165 pounds, yet starred at Brown University before turning professional. The two-time All-American half-back became the first black player in the Rose Bowl in 1916.

The Chicago native served in World War I and in 1919 he joined



Fritz Pollard was the NFL's first black coach, a player-coach in the early 1920s.

the Akron Pros of the American Professional Football League, which was renamed the American Professional Football Association the next year. He led Akron to the championship in 1920 and became the first black coach in NFL history when he played and served as coach in 1921.

The APFA was renamed the NFL in 1922.

Pollard was fast and powerful, and one of the main draws in the league's infancy.



Pro Hall of Famer Fritz Pollard in 1975 from his home in New Rochelle, N.Y.

"He was a very rugged individual. ... He was excellent in track. He was a pretty good basketball (player), he was good at baseball. He was just almost a natural athlete," said John M. Carroll, a history professor at Lamar University and the author of the book "Fritz Pollard: Pioneer in Racial Advancement."

"Even though he was small, I think he had incredibly good talents of speed and also agility."

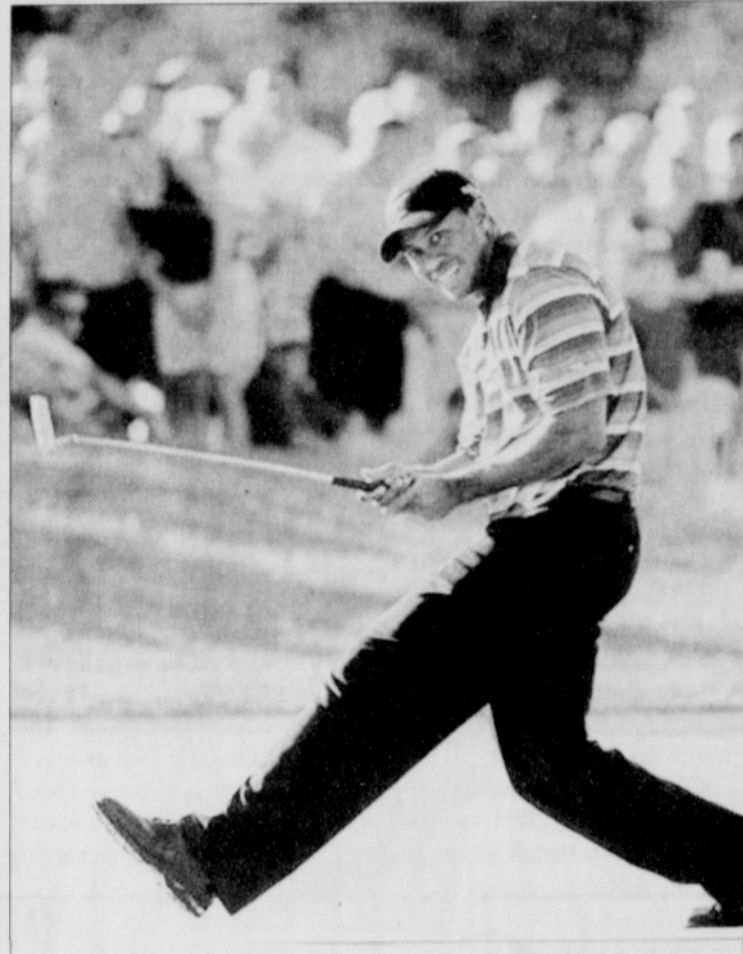
He needed all of his athletic ability to survive in the league's early

days because of his race and size. To prevent pile-ons, Pollard would spin on his back and stick his knees and cleats in the air after he was tackled, said Fritz Pollard III, one of his grandsons who has lobbied for years for his induction into the Hall of Fame.

"In that era, just to play, you had to be tough," the grandson said. "These guys, they had a regular job. This wasn't their full-time job. They had a job and they would go out there and this was like a weekend thing to pick up extra money for something that they loved."

Pollard played and at times coached for four NFL teams until 1926. After his NFL career, he organized all-black teams that played all over the country into the mid-1930s in an effort to get the NFL to sign more black players. It is believed there were no black players in the league from 1934-46.

Pollard, who died in 1986 at age 92, also was a successful businessman. He owned a Harlem music studio where artists such as Duke Ellington rehearsed. He also served as an entertainment agent and ran a tabloid newspaper.



## Hit and Miss

Tiger Woods reacts after missing a birdie on the 17th green in Akron, Ohio during the final round of the NEC Invitational on Sunday. Woods made par on 17 and 18 in to win the tournament by one shot over Chris DiMarco at six under par. (AP photo)

## Youth Football Signups

Registration is still open for youth tackle football through the Police Activities League in Portland, Gresham and Troutdale. PAL serves 23 teams of youth in the fourth through eighth grade. A flag football program in Tigard will also start this year.

Practices are held in parks managed by Portland Parks and Recreation as well as various

school fields. Games are held on Saturdays with overflow games scheduled during weeknight practices.

The opening jamboree is Saturday, Aug. 27, and opening day is Saturday, Sept. 10. Player signups will continue until teams are filled. Application forms are available at [www.palkids.org](http://www.palkids.org) or by calling 503-823-0250.

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