

FOOTBALL

Chiefs DB ready to return after bout with cancer

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

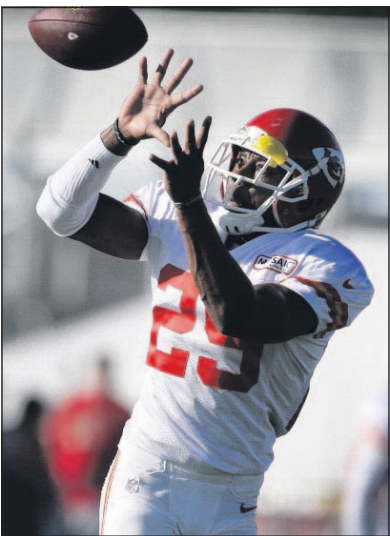
ST. JOSEPH, Mo. — Kansas City Chiefs safety Eric Berry is ready to step back onto the field for a real game. Well, as real as the preseason gets.

The three-time Pro Bowl selection is expected to play in Saturday night's preseason opener again Arizona, fewer than nine months after being diagnosed with cancer. Berry is expected to play with the first- and second-team defenses in the first half against the Cardinals.

"We're thinking he's going to play, and we'll just see how things go," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "He's been going, so I think he's ready to go out there and do his thing."

Many wondered whether Berry would ever play again after he was diagnosed late last season with lymphoma. But after several rounds of chemotherapy, Berry was deemed cancer-free during the summer, and he reported to training camp with rookies and select veterans. He hasn't missed a practice since then, although he was held out of some workouts.

The last few days, he has started



AP Photo/Orlin Wagner
Kansas City Chiefs strong safety Eric Berry catches a ball during drills at training camp on Tuesday.

to resemble the Berry of old. He picked off a pass by quarterback Alex Smith a couple of days ago and has been a handful for the offense in practice.

"I told him I saw too much of him today because he had a couple interceptions out here, from an offensive standpoint," Reid said, joking. "But I'm happy as can be

for him. He's like a little kid out here playing. He's having fun, and he's appreciative of everything and everybody that has been with him throughout this whole ordeal. He's loving life right now and it shows on the field, too."

The Chiefs have not made Berry available to the media since the first week of camp, when he discussed his treatment and recovery. But his teammates have marveled not only at the fact that he is back on the field, but that he is already playing at a high level.

"I think it's going to be a very exciting time, not just for him, but for us to have a guy like that back behind you," said All-Pro linebacker Justin Houston, who visited Berry during his treatment in Georgia. "You know he's going to come play hard every play."

Berry has been the starting strong safety the majority of his career, but he was listed as the backup free safety on the initial depth chart released earlier this week. Husain Abdullah and Ron Parker are the starters and Tyvon Branch is the backup strong safety.

The versatile Berry has also been working out as the nickel back, though, and could join the starters

on the field against Arizona.

"It runs something through my body to just see him out there running around," Parker said. "It's another energy he brings out there. When I saw him get that pick (this week), it's just a good feeling to see him with his hands on the ball again and back moving around."

Even when he has been safety, Berry's role seems to have changed. Before his illness, he had morphed into a linebacker-safety hybrid, often lining up near the line of scrimmage to rush the passer or defend the run. Thus far in training camp, Berry has lined up deep in the defensive backfield, helping out primarily with pass coverage.

Then there is the mentorship that he is able to provide to younger players. The Chiefs drafted a pair of defensive backs, including Marcus Peters in the first round. Berry has taken them under his advisement, often huddling with them on the sidelines in practice.

"He's feeling better, I think, every day," defensive coordinator Bob Sutton said. "He's seeing things better. It's slowing down for him. It's strictly football — this has nothing to do with what he overcame. I think he's happy with that."

Manning no-go vs. 'Hawks

By ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Peyton Manning isn't expected to play in the Denver Broncos' preseason opener at Seattle on Friday night.

Coach Gary Kubiak has been managing Manning's snaps at training camp, giving the 39-year-old quarterback every few days off to keep his legs and mind fresh for the season.

Manning faded down the stretch last season when he was hobbled by a strained right thigh.

He looks fitter, trimmer and more mobile this summer as he adapts to a new offense that has him doing roll-outs and bootlegs and this week said, "I do feel good moving around out there, arm feels good."

GOLF

Johnson struggles, Mickelson gets familiar with the sand during round one

British Open champ finishes three-over par

By EDDIE PELLIS
Associated Press

SHEBOYGAN, Wis. — The "other" player in the PGA Championship's power threesome pretty much played like it Thursday.

Zach Johnson struggled to find the fairway all day and shot 3-over 75 in his first round at a major since capturing the British Open last month.

That was nine shots out of the lead and four behind his playing partners, world Nos. 1 and 2, Rory McIlroy and Jordan Spieth.

"I had difficulty on every tee," said Johnson, who hit only five of 14 fairways.

He got frustrated. After gouging out of the rough three times, then

needing a 10-foot putt to save bogey on No. 4, he picked up the ball and threw it into Lake Michigan.

On the next tee box, he put another one in the water, leading to a long discussion with a rules official, then a drop far back in the fairway that led to a bogey 6.

Pretty much par for the course for Johnson, who beat Spieth and Jason Day by one stroke in regulation at St. Andrews, then won a three-way playoff to capture his second career major.

The PGA traditionally pairs the past three major winners in the opening rounds.

That put Johnson with Spieth, who won the Masters and U.S. Open this year, and McIlroy, who is the defending PGA champ.

They drew a big crowd.

Johnson only wished he could have given them a better show.

"There were some good irons,

some substantial amount of mistakes that I can recall," Johnson said. "About four or five mental mistakes I can easily recall. That's frustrating."

MAJOR DIFFERENCE

While the last major was going on at St. Andrews, Scott Piercy was playing in Alabama.

Piercy's win at the Barbasol Championship, an opposite field event from the British Open, locked in his spot and gave him plenty of momentum for the PGA.

He kept it going Thursday, with a 4-under 68, joining David Lingmerth (67) as one of only two players to break 70 in the afternoon at Whistling Straits, after the wind kicked up and the course dried out.

"I was starting to feel like my game is coming around," said Piercy, who missed a chunk of last season after having surgery on his

right elbow. "The wave of confidence is starting to build, I feel like. And around here, if you hit quality shots, you get rewarded."

Certainly, the world wasn't paying much attention last month while Piercy was notching his third career PGA Tour victory — this one on the Robert Trent Jones course near Auburn. Maybe he'll get his due this week. No big difference to him, either way.

"I just think of it as golf," Piercy said. "I know it's hard to imagine, but I'll just go get some rest and go do it again in the morning."

PHIL IN THE SANDBOX

Phil Mickelson peered out of the bunker and saw a 20-foot-high wall made of railroad ties separating him from the 17th green.

By then, he was used to it. Lefty spent an awful lot of time playing in an assortment of Pete Dye's 1,012

sand traps Thursday.

On 17, Mickelson took a big swing, banged the lip of the trap with his wedge on the follow through and watched the ball sail above the wall and stop just off of the putting surface.

"I was really worried about hitting two or three shots and staying down there," he said.

It was that kind of day for the five-time major champion, who spent most of his blustery round wiping grit off his face.

How many traps was he in?

"I lost count by probably hole 8 or 9," he said.

For the record, he hit seven of his 72 shots out of the sand. Given that, an even-par round didn't seem so bad.

"You hit a bad shot, and some of the bad ones like I did, and you immediately throw par out of your mind and you're just fighting."

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