

NFL

Recovered from broken leg, Lockett practices for Seahawks

Seattle Seahawks' wide receiver Tyler Lockett reaches to catch a ball during NFL football training camp in Renton, Wash.

AP Photo/Elaine Thompson



By TIM BOOTH
AP Sports Writer

RENTON, Wash. — Seattle Seahawks wide receiver Tyler Lockett's memories of Christmas 2016 are fuzzy, the result of major surgery and pain medication.

"I don't remember Christmas. I probably opened one present and I was halfway asleep," Lockett said.

The speedy, undersized pass catcher for the Seahawks returned to practice Friday for the first time since December when he broke both bones in his lower right leg. Lockett was activated off the physically unable to perform list, putting behind him the memories of a forgettable Christmas spent in a hospital room recovering from surgery.

Lockett's work was limited. He did individual drills and fielded punts on special teams — where he was a Pro Bowl selection as a returner in 2015 as a rookie. Basic steps, yes, but progress toward the expectation that he will be ready for the start of the regular season.

"As soon as they let me go today I didn't know what to do so I was just running around,

having fun, being a little kid again," Lockett said.

Lockett's recovery has been challenging and lengthy. Lockett broke both bones in his lower leg after defensive back Brandon Williams landed on him awkwardly during a Christmas Eve loss to Arizona. His surgery started that night and went into Christmas morning.

"I opened one present. Don't even know what it is. Can't remember what it was. It was probably clothes," Lockett said.

Lockett doesn't know how long he was in the hospital recovering from surgery. He was in a wheelchair for a time and also had to use crutches. Lockett said the hardest part was spending the majority of the offseason in Seattle constantly doing rehabilitation. He believed three months ago that he was ready to start running and making football moves again, but understood the precautions being taken by the Seahawks to make sure he was fully ready to practice.

Despite all those obstacles, Lockett said he wouldn't ask for a different situation.

"If it could happen again I

probably would let it happen. I wouldn't take back what happened. I really learned a lot about life and I really learned a lot that helped me grow throughout this entire process," Lockett said.

If Lockett is fully healthy by the Sept. 10 opener against Green Bay, some of the questions facing the Seahawks will be answered. Lockett is Seattle's primary kickoff and punt returner. By the time he broke his leg, Lockett had also emerged as Seattle's No. 2 receiver after being slowed early in the 2016 season by a sprained knee. Lockett finished last season with only 41 receptions but 16 of those came in the three games preceding his injury.

"To see him come back the way that he has and really attack the offseason and the rehab that he needed to do, and to see him back out here at training camp is a special thing," offensive coordinator Darrell Bevell said. "Right away I remember going to visit him at the hospital and he was really positive and he knew he was going to get back and what he was going to do and attack the rehab and he's done it."

Lynch a big hit with Raiders so far

By JANIE MCCAULEY
Associated Press

NAPA, Calif. — Marshawn Lynch plowed through the line, dreadlocks swaying on a rare cool summer morning in Napa then juggled the football to the delight of hundreds cheering from nearby bleachers.

They raised phone cameras to capture the self-proclaimed Money-Lynch's every move. A film crew followed, too.

It's Marshawn Mania in wine country. And Lynch sure seems to be loving the attention of his un-retirement, back in that familiar No. 24 jersey, just different colors now that he's with his hometown team.

Lynch joined the Oakland Raiders on a restructured two-year deal following an April trade from Seattle, where he had retired following the 2015 season. Now he has a chance to keep Derek Carr and Co. contending for an AFC West title and a shot at the Super Bowl.

"He's going to run through some people's faces, I think that's what he's going to do," Carr said. "He's going to protect the quarterback. ... He's good at that. Very physical. That part of the game is fun to him. I tend to like to slide or go over people, and he likes to go through them, so I don't have to do it."

The Raiders returned to the playoffs for the first time in 14 years then lost in the wild card game at Houston last season without Carr, who went down with a broken right fibula Dec. 24 against Denver as Oakland missed out on a division title.

Lynch has brought some new

life to an already deep and talented team.

"Let's go, Beast Mode!" on man yelled as Lynch jogged by between periods.

There's no question Lynch has boosted the morale of a stung fan base dreading the Raiders' move to Las Vegas in three years.

Alex King, a 23-year-old lifelong Raiders fan from Salinas, sported his Lynch jersey with a leather vest over it and spiked leather cuff bracelets Friday in a front-row seat off the practice field.

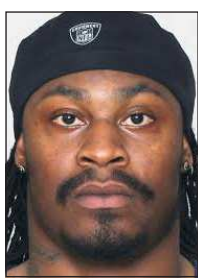
"I really like that he's doing a real good thing for his town," King said. "He's always been good for the city, he has never been a ghost and left his city. For him to come back to the team he's always wanted to play for, it's really good for the city and the team itself."

Lynch has been even more visible in Oakland than ever. He saved a soul food restaurant, led a bike ride through town in May and offered tickets to a water park for 2,000 kids.

On the field, Oakland has a healthy quarterback and Lynch eager to take the ball and run.

The 31-year-old running back has quickly become a training camp phenomenon and big-personality bright spot for that "Just Win, Baby!" fan base.

"When I think of Marshawn, I think of passion because he's a very passionate player," coach Jack Del Rio said. "I think of toughness and physicality. I think he brings those things to our football team. He's



Lynch

been a terrific teammate, been great from Day 1. Everything has been really outstanding with him and him joining us and fitting in with our guys. I think they love him. We love having him, so it's great. He's healthy and in good shape and ready to have a good year for us."

Lynch carried for at least 10 touchdowns every year from 2011 to 2014, including a career-best 13 during the '14 season to help lead the Seattle Seahawks to a Super Bowl title. Lynch's 51 TDs rushing are the most in the NFL since 2011 even though he played just seven games in 2015 and was retired last season.

The Raiders can't wait to see him in pads and when it all counts.

"He's a fun guy to be around all the time. He's a great teammate. He's fun in meetings. He's fun in the meal room," offensive coordinator Todd Downing said. "It's certainly nice to see him out there and running around and moving the way he is. We're really pleased with where he's at."

Lynch already said the reason he even considered coming out of retirement was to give something back to Oakland before the Raiders depart for Sin City in 2020.

"It's going to be good for all of us. It'll be especially nice for those that know Marshawn in a personal way that followed him throughout his career, having played right there in Cal and grown up in the Bay Area," Del Rio said. "It's awesome, so I'm sure it will be special for a lot of people."



Former St. Louis Rams and Arizona Cardinals quarterback Kurt Warner, left, greets Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald before the Pro Football Hall of Fame NFL pre-season game in Canton, Ohio, Thursday, Aug. 3, 2017. Warner is to be inducted into the Hall of Fame later this month.

AP Photo/Ron Schwane

WARNER:

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couldn't write the history of professional football without me," Warner said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I'm very honored and humbled that anybody — but that a collective group of people — felt that way."

In between St. Louis and Arizona was a brief stop with the New York Giants, where his style didn't really fit the system and he was benched in favor of rookie Eli Manning.

Warner was looking for work after that and wound up in Arizona with a franchise with a history of failure.

But in 2008, he took the Cardinals on an unexpected run to the Super Bowl and a narrow loss to Pittsburgh.

In that run, the combination of Warner to a young Larry Fitzgerald was the greatest passing duo in any single postseason.

"You could see the two-time MVP, Super Bowl champion, Super Bowl MVP, you're kind of just in awe," Fitzgerald said. "And then you get to know him as a man, you see how humble he was and how down to earth, approachable, family oriented, just a wonderful teammate. You just gained more respect for the kind of person he was. Then how he pushed me to get better, how to play this game."

Warner knows it's an unusual resume.

"I didn't get the opportunities everybody else did," he said. "Even in the middle of my career I had some crazy things happen where some of those opportunities were taken away from me. But when I played the game, when I stepped between those lines, I took advantage of every opportunity."

"And I think I played this game the right way and as well as anybody that's ever played it."

He looks at his long climb to the NFL as a succession of success stories.

"I sat on the bench for four years in college (Northern Iowa), but the one year I played I was player of the year in my conference," he said. "Then I went to Arena Football. I played three years. I was in the championship game twice and was voted the best quarterback in Arena Football during my time there. I went to Europe for

a year, was the best quarterback statistically in the one year that I played there."

In other words, all he needed was a chance.

Torry Holt was a rookie wide receiver for the Rams when Warner became the starter.

"When things happened to Trent and Trent went down," Holt said, "Kurt's number was called and he was ready. He came in and we never skipped a beat. With the way he prepped, his attention to detail and his love and passion for football and for quarterbacking was dead on."

In his first year as an NFL starter, Warner led the Rams to the Super Bowl, finishing with a dramatic win over Tennessee in an MVP performance.

St. Louis made it to the Super Bowl again in the 2001 season, but lost to New England.

Arizona was long considered a laughingstock of ineptitude. But not with Warner at the controls.

In 2008, there were some ugly losses but enough wins to take the NFL West title at 9-7. Some considered the Cardinals the worst playoff team in league history.

But with the Warner-to-Fitzgerald connection working magic, Arizona went on a run that didn't end until the close Super Bowl loss to Pittsburgh.

Warner's last game at home came in a playoff contest against Green Bay in the 2009 season. The Cardinals won 51-45 in overtime. Warner had more touchdown passes (five) than he did incompletions (four). He said it may have been the best he's ever played.

He was brutally beaten down in his final game at New Orleans. But he'd already decided it was time to go.

Now he has an NFL Network gig and lots of time to devote to his family and his Christian faith.

Warner and his wife Brenda operate the First Things First Foundation, using their values as a guide for helping people in need.

"I had plenty of lousy football games, but I don't feel there's any blemishes on the character," he said. "When it's all said and done at the end of the day, that is by far the thing that I'm most proud of."

HALL OF FAME: Andersen to become just second place kicker to be enshrined

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Davis pushed for more Broncos in the hall. From the two Denver teams he helped win NFL titles in 1997 and '98, only John Elway and Shannon Sharpe also are in.

"Steve Atwater, Jason Elam, Rod Smith, (owner) Pat Bowlen," he said, reeling off the names. "Those are ones I played with and I certainly think they will all be in."

Andersen joins Jan Stenerud as the enshrined kickers; Ray Guy is the only pure punter in the hall. Although Andersen is the NFL's scoring leader and kicked for 25 seasons, it took him eight years of eligibility before getting in.

Considering the role kickers play, especially in today's game, he believes that trend will change.

"With my election to the Hall of Fame and the level of skill today, it moves the conversation along," Andersen said. "I would argue that, besides the quarterback position, kickers affect the outcome of games more than anyone."

"There are a lot of guys I feel should be looked at more seriously," he added, mentioning not only kickers such as Gary Anderson and the still-active Adam Vinatieri, but special teamer Steve Tasker and punter Sean Landetta. "It's a tight squeeze."

"It feels good to be on the other side, and now it's my obligation to enhance their chances. I hope it's not another 21 years where no one



The 2017 Class of the Pro Football Hall of Fame pose during the Enshrinee's Gold Jacket Dinner, Friday, Aug. 4, 2017, in Canton, Ohio.

Bob Rossiter/The Canton Repository via AP

gets in."

Andersen doesn't expect a special teams player to get in yearly, instead targeting "every three to five years." Easley, selected by the seniors committee, is in more of a rush to see safeties inducted.

"We set the tone on defense," the former hard-hitting Seahawks star said. "We're going to get a lot of these guys in the hall. Between John Lynch, Atwater, Brian Dawkins, Darren Woodson — any of those four are fine, or all of them."

"I prefer all of them," he added with a laugh, calling for a "megasafty class."

Beyond that quartet — Lynch has been a frequent finalist in the voting — Easley recognized another group that soon will be eligible.

"We've got a lot of guys coming behind them, you know, Ed Reed, Troy Polamalu," Easley said. "We got some guys who (annually) will

be genuine contenders."

Davis' election was delayed by questions about such a short career: Davis played seven NFL seasons, the last two wrecked by injuries. But the other five were spectacular.

His comparison, he noted, is Gale Sayers, who also had a mercurial career but was a first-ballot entry. That led to more campaigning by Davis.

"Now the precedent is reset," he said. "It should not be how long you played. What it should be based on is how well you played in the NFL."

Asked about the exclusivity of any hall of fame, Davis said: "That's what makes it special, everyone can't get in."

Then he chuckled.

"But when you're on the other side, you say, 'Can't they open the floodgates and unplug the hole and let guys in?'"