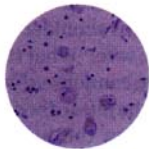


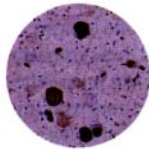
# Living with Head Trauma

Here, three people who've seen firsthand the damage concussions can cause, whether as a single career-ending blow or as a deterioration in health years after a player retires.—ELAINE VITONE

## BRAIN TISSUE UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



NORMAL



POST-  
TRAUMA

### Harry Jacobs

Linebacker  
Patriots 1960–62, Bills 1963–69,  
Saints 1970

"I remember one time we were playing Miami. Larry Csonka blocked me from the right side, and his knee hit me right in the head. They gave me smelling salts and held up two fingers. It was always two. We didn't call them concussions when I played. We called them dings. I don't remember much about my career or how many dings I got, which must have something to do with it.

"I'm having problems now. I've been afraid to drive to Buffalo—I don't know if I can find my way back. But every day when I don't feel like getting up—because I don't, most days—God gets hold of me, gets me out of bed. I'm looking this in the eyeball."

### Eleanor Perfetto, Wife of Ralph Wenzel

Lineman  
Steelers 1966–70, Chargers 1972–73

"Ralph was first diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment twelve years ago and has been in an assisted-living facility for two. He can't feed himself. He can't coordinate his body. He really has to think about it before he even gets out of his chair. Some days are better than others. He'll laugh if someone says something funny. And then there are days when I've been at the facility for an hour and I'm feeding him dinner, and all of a sudden he'll look at me like, 'Hey, when did you get here?'"

"I've reached a stage of acceptance. But sometimes I'll still think, Oh, my God, I can't believe I'm leaving him here. And then I remember: He's not Ralph."

### Merril Hoge

Running back  
Steelers 1987–93, Bears 1994

"I got a concussion in Kansas City, then another one six weeks later when we played in Chicago. The impact tore up my face mask and cut my chin open. I stopped breathing in the training room. It took me three years to fully recover. My vision was awful. Lights killed me. I didn't know who my wife was. I had zero desire to live. I read to my 3-year-old daughter—her books were about all I could read. I had to learn all over again.

"When I started working at ESPN, I would stay up all night practicing my lines. But when I'd do the shows, I couldn't follow the conversation. Thank the Lord most of my shows were taped."