

## Oklahoma Thunder football player severely injured during game

by: MIKE BROWN World Sports Writer

Sunday, June 07, 2009

6/7/2009 6:51:50 PM

A 21-year-old Oral Roberts University student incurred a severe spinal cord injury and fractured neck while playing defensive end for the Oklahoma Thunder minor league football team Saturday night in Springdale, Ark.

Emeka Nnaka fractured his C6 vertebra when he collided with Thunder teammate Josh Toops and an Arkansas War Cats player on a kickoff return, according to a World Football League release.

Nnaka was transported to Washington Regional Hospital in Fayetteville, where he is awaiting surgery Monday. He had slight movement in his hands and no movement or feeling in his lower extremities, Thunder team doctor Venkatesh Movva said.

Doctors hope to stabilize the fractured vertebra and remove pressure from the spinal cord, where swelling has occurred, Movva said.

"Hopefully, he'll get full use of the upper half of his body, and possibly some portion of the lower extremities," WFL president James Ashford said. "There is hope that he can recover fully."

Ashford said Nnaka, the son of Nigerian parents, grew up in Macon, Ga., but attended three years of high school in Nigeria before moving back to Georgia. He's in his junior year at ORU.

Nnaka's mother is scheduled to arrive in Arkansas on Monday, Ashford said.

The Thunder has set up a donation fund in Nnaka's name to help offset the cost of his medical expenses. Donations can be made at any Exchange Bank, Oklahoma Thunder football games and the Thunder office, 311 E. Rogers Blvd. in Skiatook.

The Thunder won its game against the War Cats, 78-6. The next home game is 7 p.m. Saturday against the Oklahoma City Maddogs at Skiatook's Exchange Bank Stadium.

The WFL is a 17-team league with teams stretching from northern Iowa to south Texas.

Copyright © 2009, World Publishing Co. All rights reserved

 Return to Story