



Fred Mitchell

AROUND TOWN

# Bears know crash could have been a lot worse

## Briggs a lucky one, but team has lost players in accidents

August 28, 2007

According to police charges filed Monday, Lance Briggs was wrong. But at least he was not *dead* wrong.

The Bears' extended family waited with heightened anxiety Monday when news surfaced that Lance Briggs' \$350,000 Lamborghini was found heavily damaged along the Edens Expressway in the wee hours.



The fact that the luxury automobile was abandoned and Briggs surfaced unscathed at Halas Hall hours later quickly shifted public reaction from concern for his physical well-being to questions about legal culpability.

The Bears have an unfortunate history of losing players in automobile accidents. On Christmas Eve 1990, I had the sorrowful assignment of covering the funeral of 23-year-old Bears defensive tackle Fred Washington in Denison, Texas. Washington and a 22-year-old female companion, Petra Stoll of Palatine, died in a one-car accident off Waukegan Road, two miles from Washington's residence, at about 2:30 a.m. on Dec. 21, 1990.

Five years earlier, Washington's father had been killed in an automobile accident.

On a crisp, sunny morning, Bears teammates Richard Dent, Terry Price, David Tate, James Rouse, Mickey Pruitt and Dante Jones attended Washington's funeral. After the services, Washington was buried at the Fairview Cemetery in Denison, 80 miles north of Dallas.

A banner attached to a spray of flowers on the side of the casket read: "Fred Washington, No. 91 on your program, but No. 1 in your heart."

In 1964, Bears running back Willie Galimore and end John "Bo" Farrington were killed in a one-car accident during training camp. Galimore had helped lead the Bears to the 1963 NFL championship with his elusive running style.

In 1982, Bears Hall of Fame linebacker Bill George was killed in a three-car accident at the age of 51. George was driving eastbound on Illinois Highway 72 when a tractor-trailer struck his van at an intersection. George was taken to Swedish American Hospital in Rockford, where he was pronounced dead.

Word on street:



This has been a challenging year for the White Sox on the field, to put it mildly. But White Sox Charities has managed to flourish. Through the generosity of Sox fans and their participation in charity initiatives such as the White Sox Legacy Brick Program, Family Field Day and Picnic in the Park, Chicago White Sox Charities has already raised more than \$1 million in 2007. The funds will go to the support of hundreds of Chicago-based organizations, including those leading the fight against cancer and those dedicated to improving the lives of Chicago's youth through education and athletics.

Overheard:



Mike Ditka continues his relentless crusade to improve the NFL pension program to assist many of his former teammates and contemporaries in financial need.

"It's not a matter of us making progress with the NFL. They have to make progress with themselves," Ditka said. "Everyone is aware of the situation. The system they have in place now for disabilities is completely flawed. They have people on the board who are not qualified. They need an independent group of doctors, and maybe former players who have no stake in any of this to

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make decisions on who gets disability and who doesn't. This can all be cured. I am grateful to the commissioner (Roger Goodell), who is doing a lot of great things. If this is a priority, let's fix it. And then we will all go away, and everybody in the NFL will be happy."



#### Local attractions:

Bears cornerback Charles Tillman and his Cornerstone Foundation will be spending more than \$10,000 as they take 200 inner-city Chicago children back-to-school shopping at 7 p.m. Tuesday as part of the Cornerstone Foundation's "Pick it Up!" program. Tillman will join the children as they go through the aisles of the Meijer store in Rolling Meadows (1301 Meijer Drive), picking up school supplies. For more info, visit [www.charles-tillman.org](http://www.charles-tillman.org). ... Ryan Anetsberger, a 2004 Tribune All-State player from Glenbard West, signed with the Florida Marlins after being drafted in June. He made the New York-Penn League All-Star team. And Rick Angel, also a Tribune All-State selection in 2004, was named to the NCAA Division III All-America team in the spring. Angel followed that up by making the National Baseball Congress All-America team at a recent national tournament. Angel returns to Illinois Wesleyan for his senior year. Both players were coached at Glenbard West by Jim Fornaciari. ... The Cubs are not counting their World Series championships just yet. But that can't stop optimistic merchandisers from printing up world championship T-shirts. Check out: [www.worldchampsandshirts.com](http://www.worldchampsandshirts.com). ... The first Gale Sayers Celebrity Open to benefit the Better Boys Foundation and the Gale Sayers Center will be held Sept. 19 at Highland Park Country Club. Visit: [www.golfinvite.com/galesayersopen](http://www.golfinvite.com/galesayersopen).

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