

HARRY CARSON

OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF HALL OF FAME LINEBACKER HARRY CARSON

For those in need, right now!

July 19, 2010

Posted by Harry Carson

Uncategorized

It's been a while since I posted anything online within the Retired Players community. Part of that is by design (quite frankly we all need a break some time). But the other reason is because I recently spent time undergoing Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy treatment. The subject of hyperbaric therapy was first brought up to me when I was engaged in a conversation with the wife of a former player who reached out to me for some advice. She did so because her husband who played in the NFL years ago was exhibiting early signs of dementia. She worked in the medical field and through our discussions I thought it made sense to investigate oxygen therapy.

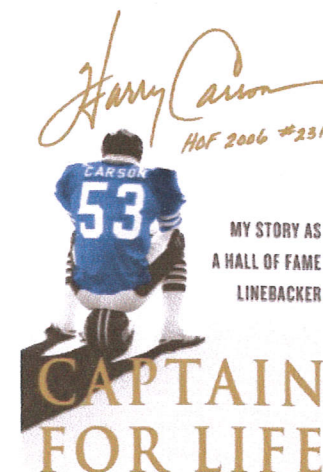
After appearing in the ESPN "Outside the Lines" feature earlier this year during Super Bowl coverage I received an invitation to undergo hyperbaric therapy at Hyperbaric Therapy of the Low Country in Hilton Head, South Carolina. Dr. Pete Stevens who runs that facility graciously made the offer to allow me to see what oxygen therapy was all about. During our initial conversation I automatically thought going through the therapy once or twice might be a good way to experience the therapy and would be enough to give others an understanding of what it might be about. I was informed by Dr. Stevens that to truly get the full benefit of the therapy I would need to do at least 40 "dives" or sessions in the chamber. I generally keep a pretty full schedule and to do 2 dives a day at 1 hour and 10-15 minutes per dive was not something I thought I could realistically do. The most I thought I could do was to make a 10 day commitment to undergo the therapy.

My rationale for even considering undergoing the therapy was purely for my own fact finding mission to see what it was all about. Over recent years I've gotten numerous calls or inquiries from other former players or wives of former players looking for resources either because the former players are beginning to lose their focus, are having problems with their memory, are having problems with depression or any of many other neurological issues. Some of these players have been very open with their concerns while others have asked in strict confidence that I not share any information with anyone including their wives or "significant others". I'm not a doctor but it's clear to me that some of the retired players I've encounter are experiencing residual effects of concussions or traumatic brain injuries they sustained from playing football. For me to even try to be a resource for others I felt it was important to undergo this experience before possibly recommending it to others who seek help.

On Saturday May 18th my wife Maribel and I set out on our journey and drove from our home in Northern New Jersey to the Low Country of South Carolina. We eventually arrived at the Clinic in Hilton Head on Sunday afternoon. Upon arriving I immediately opted to begin the therapy. Not only did I opt to begin the therapy but also made the decision to do 3 dives a day to get the maximum out of the time and the experience. To that point Dr. Stevens had never had a patient to submit to 3 dives in a day. To my surprise, Maribel had consulted with her doctor who thought it would be a good idea for her to also undergo the therapy since she underwent some surgery late last year and was experiencing some post-surgical pain. She knew why we were going to Hilton Head but she never gave me an indication that participating in the treatment was something she wanted to do as well. Dr. Stevens and his staff made it possible from a scheduling standpoint for Maribel to undergo the therapy as a couple.

As we underwent the first couple of days of hyperbaric therapy the most immediate result we noticed was we got the absolute best sleep either of us had gotten in years. With an almost steady dose of being subjected to 100% oxygen being carried through our bloodstream it was easy to see the first benefit of the treatments. On a more personal level the effects were not so obvious. Maribel is very much into fitness and is a runner. She had been experiencing pain in her right knee from running prior to the treatment and of course the pain from the surgery. Aside from the great rest, Maribel noticed that the pain she had been experiencing subsided significantly. From my own experience I did not notice any

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Captain is my own first person narrative and personal journey through my early years, my 21 year football career and life after football. It is my personal account of injuries sustained playing the game and specifically concussions I gave and received as a football player and my experiences living with the lingering after effects.

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major significant changes in my overall general health. Fortunately unlike many former players I do continue to work out in my gym and consider myself in excellent physical condition. From a mental or emotional standpoint, I did feel a sense of calm and serenity I had not felt in quite some time. Eventually we extended our trip to make it possible to complete 40 dives in the chamber.

In reflecting on the experience, after more than a month of just being still and listening to my body, I am happy that I took the time to experience Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy. I was diagnosed with Post Concussion Syndrome in 1990 long before the issues of concussions or head trauma became hot button topics like they are today. I knew I was having some problems while still a player in the National Football League but at that time I couldn't quite put my finger on what was going on or why. I had no clue that the concussions I was giving and receiving on the football field was the culprit. After my diagnoses and educating myself on my own issues I've learned (over the years) how to manage my condition when I started to experience my own neurological issues. Currently I do not suffer from some of the issues many former players might be afflicted with. When I was offered the opportunity to undergo the therapy I had absolutely no expectation of HBT but in doing so I feel an increased ability to express myself with a bit more clarity than I may have been able to do in the past.

I feel the time spent (2 weeks) undergoing Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy was time well spent. Initially I had some reservations about undergoing the treatments because I have had issues of being claustrophobic in the past (with MRI machines) but that was not the case here at all. From the time I first entered the chamber I had absolutely no adverse effects from being in the chamber. I thought the experience was personally beneficial and see the treatment as a means to distribute more oxygen into the bloodstream to be carried throughout the body to accelerate healing, reduce aches and pains and provide more oxygen to the brain. Increasing the oxygen flow to the brain was the key attraction for me with the treatment. Along with the therapy we have incorporated a daily dosage of Fish Oil, CoQ10 and several other supplements to aid the flow of oxygen to the brain.

I've shared some of my HBT experiences with my good friend Sylvia Mackey. Sylvia is also one of those people who has long been a strong advocate on behalf of the wives of husbands who are looking for help for their spouses. Sylvia is in the process of learning more about HBT and other ways to assist those in the retired player community looking for resources.

I am of the opinion that if access to Hyperbaric Therapy is available to more former players many of their neurological issues could be addressed and helped in some way. I am now on record as a supporter and will do what I can to help bring a greater awareness of that form of therapy to former players looking for a resource.

Again, I'm not a doctor (I don't even play one on television) but for anyone interested in this form of therapy I would strongly suggest they do their own investigation to gain a greater insight in that type of therapy. Hyperbaric Therapy been around for hundreds of years but has been slow to be accepted in the United States.

Much has been made of former football players donating their brains to science for research. I applaud all of those players who have made that choice for others. Fortunately I'm one who cares not to wait until I pass away to be able to get some kind of understanding as to whether there is a connection between head trauma sustained as players years ago and dementia or other neurological problems former players have been diagnosed with later in life. With all due respect, donating brain tissue will most likely make the game of football a little safer for those who have yet to play one down of football. It does absolutely nothing for those who have already played and are looking for answers to their neurological issues now! To that end, I am willing to be a mouse in the cage to experiment with ways to help improve the brain functions of all who have played football on any level.

Harry Carson
NY Giants 1976-1988
Hall of Fame 2006

2 Responses to "For those in need, right now!"

1. **George Visger** says:
October 16, 2010 at 1:09 pm

Harry,
Glad to hear you are using Hyperbarics. I played for the 49ers in 80 & 81 when I developed hydrocephalus (water on the brain) and underwent emergency VP Shunt brain surgery during the 81 Super Bowl season. Two more emergency brain surgeries ten hrs apart followed 4 months after we won Super Bowl XVI, and I was given



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Claire Beck July 26, 2014

Harry, seeing Diane's message prompted me to comment that I remember both of you when you were HS students, and I have remained proud of both of you since then. Your visit to South Florence had a real impact on the students, and I, of course, was delighted to see you. I told you that [...]

George K.Quick July 24, 2014

Just finish reading your book "Captain for Life" found it extremely interesting since I knew all the people mentioned at SCSU. I am a 1968 graduate from Orangeburg. I was also happy to know that your son Donald is doing well. Your book reflects a man of great character and integrity, a real Bulldog.

Mandy Yost July 5, 2014

Harry- Last year or so we met at Quality Inn in Hilton Head, SC for the Golf tournament. You also met a dear friend of mine and waiter, Bobby Pacheco, from Applebee's. He died a few months after meeting you. There is a memorial for him at the Applebee's with a Giant's flag hanging in [...]

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last rites. Also given the hospital bills and took me nearly 5 years to successfully sue the 49ers for Workers Comp just to get my bills paid for. I developed hydrocephalus from repeated concussions over my 12 years of organized ball, dating back to my 3rd year in Pop Warner when I was hospitalized after I knocked myself out in a tackling drill at age 13.

I was evaluated for 3 days at Dr Amens clinic Oct 2009 and he recommended hyperbarics and Omega 3 fish oils. Both reduce inflammation and improve brain functioning.

I just finished my 80th hyperbaric treatment this week, and the results have been profound. After 40 I returned to Dr Amens clinic for a follow up exam, and my SPECT scans were greatly improved as well as some of my microcog memory tests improving up to 700%. Looking forward to my next exam to see what 80 treatments have done for me, and planning to submit a paper to some of the Scientific Journals on our results.

I am with you in offering to be a lab rat to help others avoid what my family and I have faced the last 29 years since I was injured with a traumatic brain injury and tossed to the sidelines like a discarded piece of meat. I was coordinating with Dr Bennett Omalu, and offered to let him collect a living brain sample from me during my next emergency VP Shunt brain surgery, to test for tau protein buildup. Tau proteins are a result of head trauma and killed Mike Webster, Andre Waters and a host of other great NFL players.

I wish you and your family good luck and good health. Keep up the fight for those with no voices.

George Visger
Brain Damaged Wildlife Biologist/Motivational Speaker
Visger & Associates Environmental Consulting

SF 49ers 80 & 81 (Super Bowl)
Survivor of 9 NFL Caused Emergency VP Shunt Brain Surgeries
Benefactor of ZERO NFL Benefits

2. Ray Cralle, RPT says:

March 9, 2012 at 5:15 pm



Harry and George,

Glad to hear you can the benefits of HBOT. I own an outpatient hyperbaric oxygen/ physical therapy center in South Florida. We are treating some of the most well known active NFL players at our clinic now. We are also using HBOT to help NHL players, Polo players and our wounded veterans (pro bono), who were exposed to IEDs.

We have seen remarkable progress in our athletes and veterans through our HBOT, neuro rehab and we have documented our findings through SPECT brain imaging and other methods as well.

Please visit our website for our contact information and I wish you both the best!

Ray Cralle, RPT.

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The Loss of a Good Man!

In the same breath....!

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