

#31

Timothy Paul Harry, 6' 2" 210lbs



Timothy "Big Tim" Harry, the 6' 2", 210-pound junior safety liked to play all sports, excelling at baseball and basketball. Described as a nice boy who did anything you asked him to, Tim would go ahead and do it. Friends, relatives and teachers described Harry as quiet and well liked. His mother said that he was popular with the girls and he liked to listen to the radio. A good kid who everyone loved, Harry was the youngest of ten children born to Mr. and Mrs. Jules Harry of Gum Street in South Vacherie and the first of the couple's children to play high school football.

Harry began his athletic career as a basketball player, but when coach Allen Hymel decided to hold football tryouts two weeks before the season, Harry made the team. Although Coach Hymel wanted to play Harry at tight end, with limited time to learn the offense, he decided to play Harry on defense. In his very first varsity football game with three minutes remaining in the quarter, Harry tackled an opponent who had just caught a pass. Following the tackle, Harry was unable to move. "He had a hard time speaking; we thought the wind had been knocked out of him. Then he told us he couldn't feel anything," said assistant Coach Elmo Boudreaux. The impact of the tackle broke Harry's fourth and fifth vertebra and it looked like he would be paralyzed for the rest of

his life.

After being treated on the field by a doctor from West St. James Hospital, he was airlifted from the field by helicopter to Oshner Foundation Hospital in New Orleans. In an interview Saturday, his mother said the young player was looking forward to playing football again. "He's talking to us and he says he wants to go back and try it again. He says he's not giving up and he's ready to go back out on the field." Sadly, Sunday morning, September 4, 1981, Timothy passed away as a result of respiratory complications from the injury sustained during the game. It was the first football-related death in Southeast Louisiana since the 1960's when a Ben Franklin player was overcome by heat. Ochsner spokesperson Tom Gore said the respiratory complications that killed Harry were "almost expected and guaranteed in an accident of this nature" – but wanted to make sure more adequate emergency measures would be available in the future. The youngest of 10 children was buried three days later before an overflowing crowd of 1200 relatives, friends, teachers, neighbors, and football team in what was called the most widely attended funeral Mass ever at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church in Vacherie. After the service, the people in the church, led by the football team, walked slowly to the cemetery a few yards away. Surrounding his plot were bouquets of flowers. The most noticeable was a football-shaped cluster of baby chrysanthemums with "31", Timothy's jersey number, in black. Harry did take all the right precautions and made a form tackle the night his life was taken, but through his story there are lessons to be learned and that should be taken to heart.

