



### **Current and Former NFL Players, along with Sports and Mental Wellness Experts and Advocates, Tackle the Issues of Sports and Mental Wellness at Harvard Global Health Catalyst Summit.**

Boston, Mass. (May 22nd, 2019) – The 5<sup>th</sup> annual Harvard Global Health Catalyst summit will be May 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> at the Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. The major focus of the summit is the elimination of global health disparities. During mental health awareness month, the summit continues its collaborative partnership with the sports community to expand education and advocacy initiatives surrounding sports, brain health, and mental wellness. Sports, leadership, and behavior expert Dr. Tommy Shavers, a former Captain of University of Central Florida Football Team, who testifies he recovered and self-healed himself after suffering from CTE expressed symptoms of neurocognitive decline due to career ending concussions, is the architect behind this year's sports and health session with the theme, "The Brain and The Game: Sports and Mental Wellness." Dr. Shavers added, "I am honored and excited to partner again with Dr. Wilfred Ngwa and the Global Health Catalyst summit to continue bringing together the sports and science community to focus on providing real-time solutions to the current challenges surrounding sports, brain health, and mental wellness."

After his playing career ended due to multiple concussions, Dr. Shavers would go through a decade of what is today referred to as the expressed symptoms of CTE. His self-recovery model was shared at the 2016 Global Health Catalyst summit. The summit served as a catalyst for his now start-up company NESTRE Health & Performance which aims to tackle some of society's biggest brain-based challenges in brain health, mental wellness, and human performance, from a neuro-systems perspective. "We have been able to positively impact the lives of athletes and individuals who are suffering from neurocognitive and mental wellness challenges in our short time of existence, as well as strengthen the mental and neurocognitive performance of high-performance individuals," said Dr. Shavers. "The Global Health Catalyst summit has been a vital part of our progress and success. We look forward to our continued partnership as we look to change the narrative surrounding brain health and mental wellness."

NFL great and future Hall of Famer, Calvin Johnson and his co-founding partners former NFL players Rob Sims and Jason Strayhorn will be joining the summit this year. Their partnering companies Locker Room Consulting and Primitive, are striving to improve the quality of life for athletes and those suffering from pain and health related challenges. "I'm honored to be invited to collaborate with the Global Health Catalyst Summit at Harvard Medical School in its endeavor to study & research mental health wellness and its benefits in sports," said Johnson. "As a former professional athlete, I'm all too aware of the mental & physical impact sports has on an individual. The human body is simply not built to sustain the type of impact we endure on a weekly basis." He added, "While I wouldn't trade the experience I had in the NFL, I do know I'll be living with pain for the rest of my life. My goal is to be a catalyst for improving mental & physical well-being, by supporting research in this emerging field."

Former NFL Pro Bowler, Julius Thomas is excited about being a part of the Global Health Catalyst Summit and engaging in collaborative conversations about solutions for mental and cognitive health challenges facing athletes. "The time for athletes to extend their concept of health beyond just the body has come. The brain and mind need to receive the same amount of focus and time we provide the body," said Thomas. "The science and understanding of how to support mental health, have progressed to the point of necessitating new applications. To continue to treat athletes from the neck down regularly and from the neck up only in crisis situations, is a model we have to change." Thomas recently retired early from the NFL to pursue a Psy.D in Psychology to study CTE and mental health wellness for high stress individuals.

Tia McNeill, the wife of the late Fred McNeill of the Minnesota Vikings will address the impact of brain health and mental wellness on the families and caretakers of those who are suffering. Fred McNeill is the first living



player diagnosed with CTE with a post mortem confirmation. “Bringing the needs and challenges of families and caregivers of athletes into the conversation about brain health and mental wellness is so important. Those caring for athletes must begin to be a core part of the conversation.” She added, “I applaud the Global Health Catalyst Summit for highlighting the families and caregivers and aiming to propose ideas and initiatives that place a much needed value on their impacted quality of life.”

Former NFL Head Coach, Hue Jackson and the Hue Jackson Foundation are being honored as a 2019 Global Health Catalyst Mental Humanitarian Award recipient for their work in fighting human trafficking and helping survivors on their journey to recovery. “I am honored to be a part of this incredible summit, and humbled to receive such a prestigious award on behalf of the Hue Jackson Foundation,” said Coach Jackson. “I am also looking forward to the collaboration of ideas from an outstanding group of experts and advocates on sports and health.”

“The Harvard Global Health Catalyst Summit is pleased to continue to expand our efforts to address global health disparities, including within the sports community,” said Dr. Will Ngwa, the Director of the Harvard the Global Health Catalyst Summit, “We are honored to have Dr. Tommy Shavers and the partnering sports community with us again as experts, advocates, and catalyst for collaborative solutions to brain health and mental wellness in sports.”

In addition to addressing the issues of sports, brain health, and mental wellness, Dr. Shavers is hosting a number of leading experts to tackle the pressing issue of providing real-time solutions to the neurocognitive and mental wellness challenges facing the sports world. He added, “The summit has inspired and challenged us to find collaborative solutions to brain-based health challenges in sports, and we have gladly accepted that challenge.” Some of the esteemed panelist includes: Dr. Keely Kaklamanos, Director of Clinical and Sports Psychology Program for FSU Athletics; Jennifer Sanford, University of Connecticut Head Rowing Coach; Bennie Fowler III, NFL Super Bowl 50 Champion and current New York Giants player; Dr. William Lambos, Co-Founder and Chief Scientific Officer of NESTRE Health and Performance, a certified Clinical Neuropsychologist; Dr. Joseph Cooper, University of Connecticut Sport Management professor; Steve Orsini, former NFL Front Office Executive and NCAA Athletic Director; Kyle Israel, former University of Central Florida Quarterback and current college football radio analyst, and Dan Treadway, Deputy Editor at The Players’ Tribune.

The sports summit will begin at 8:00am on Saturday May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at Harvard Medical School. Registration and more information can be found [here](#).

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