

From the archives of Liberal's hometown newspaper since 1886. Researched and compiled by A.J. Coleman, L&T Reporter

1963 **Accidents in the ring and at sea**

Athletes in all sports are looked up to by admiring fans as the ultimate example of success. But once in a great while, people see the dangers of actually playing at a high level of intensity.

Kevin Ware is an excellent example of a serious injury in sports. The player of the Louisville Cardinals broke his lower leg in a gruesome fashion on national television during the NCAA Final Four game.

Earlier in the year, college football player Marcus Lattimore of the South Carolina Gamecocks also sustained an almost career-ending knee injury. He hyperextended his right knee, which resulted in the damage of several supporting key ligaments. He made a full recovery but it still goes to show the danger involved in all sports.

In 1963, the danger of boxing was revealed in a startling fashion.

"Another boxer loses life in fight ring," read the sports page headline of the Southwest Daily Times.

A 19-year-old boxer lost his life in the boxing ring one Saturday night in 1963. Francisco Velasquez died shortly after he was knocked out during an amateur benefit bout in Carbondale, Ill.

Sports fans all around the country expected that there would be new demands to ban boxing in that state. A bill had already been introduced in the Illinois senate to outlaw boxing.

An autopsy of Velasquez didn't turn up anything abnormal, but it was definitely head trauma that caused his death.

The problem with boxing then and now is not the sport, it is the players or participants. The sport only works if the participants know when to stop — and most won't stop until they get knocked out or they die.

Today, things don't simply go missing. The concept no longer exists, with all the technology and many privileges the public enjoys. One can find out exactly where people, phones, cars, planes, boats and even pets are with a click of a button. Even if they don't know, they will in about half a

day. However, there was a time when things did go missing, and in this case, a big thing went totally off the grid.

“Navy concludes Submarine with 129 aboard lost,” read the headline of the newspaper.

The Chief of Naval Operations had issued a statement that a nuclear-powered submarine known as “Thresher” had gone off the radar and was not in contact with command. In an official statement, director George W. Anderson, chief of naval operations, said, “I conclude with great regret that this fine ship with 129 souls aboard is lost.”

The Thresher was on an escort mission and had gotten separated from the ship it was escorting off the coast of Cape Cod, Mass. People were freaked out about the incident, especially because the submarine was nuclear-powered and no one really understood how nuclear technology worked. They did know that it was dangerous. Three Kansas men, from Wichita, Russell and Topeka, were among the lost sailors on the Thresher.