

The Unthinkable – OSU Plane Crash

Two OSU players among 10 killed in plane crash

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BYERS, Colo. (AP) -- Two Oklahoma State basketball players and six staffers and broadcasters associated with the team were killed aboard a plane that crashed in a snowstorm Saturday while returning from a game in Colorado, officials said.

The plane crashed about 20 miles south of Denver after taking off from Jefferson County Airport, FAA spokesman John Clabes said. The pilot and co-pilot also died.

Oklahoma State players Nate Fleming and Dan Lawson, sports information employee Will Hancock, director of basketball operations Pat Noyes, trainer Brian Luinstra, student manager Jared Weiberg, broadcast engineer Kendall Durfey, broadcaster Bill Teegins, pilot Denver Mills and co-pilot Bjorn Falistrom were aboard the plane, OSU sports information director Steve Buzzard said during a news conference in Stillwater.

"The players are handling this with each other and obviously are grieving very deeply," Buzzard said.

Buzzard said coach Eddie Sutton called the families of those on the plane to let them know of the crash.

"Obviously like everyone, Coach Sutton is stunned. But his concern obviously was getting in touch with family members and then obviously getting the help and support that everyone will need that's associated with the program," Buzzard said.

Big 12 officials will meet Sunday morning to discuss whether to postpone OSU's Tuesday night game at Texas Tech. Weiberg was the nephew of Big 12 commissioner Kevin Weiberg.

"This is indeed a very sad day for Oklahoma State University," school president James Halligan said.

The Beechcraft King Air 200 Catpass, which seats 11 passengers, crashed at about 5:35 p.m., said Jerry Snyder, a spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration.

"All we heard was a real loud engine sound. It sounded like a shrill noise. Then I saw a big fireball," said Larry Pearson, a dairy farmer who was working outside when the plane crashed. Pearson, who was about a quarter mile from the plane when it crashed, said he called 911 and cut a fence so emergency vehicles could reach the crash site.

Fleming was a redshirt freshman guard from Edmond, Okla., and Lawson a redshirt junior guard from Detroit.

Lawson, 21, played in Saturday's 81-71 loss at Colorado, but did not score. He was one of the Cowboys' main reserves, playing in every game this season and averaging about two points.

Fleming, 20, did not play against Colorado.

Teegins, 48, was a broadcaster for KWTW in Oklahoma City for the past 13 years. He was the play-by-play announcer for OSU basketball.

Hancock, was the media relations coordinator for the basketball program. He had been with the school for five years and was a graduate of the University of Kansas. His father, Bill Hancock, is director of the NCAA men's basketball tournament.

In Stillwater, several players and girlfriends of teammates came in and out of the school's basketball office with tears in their eyes, and some were sobbing.

Tom Dirato of the OSU Broadcast Group said he and an assistant coach almost got on the plane that crashed, but were moved at the last minute to another plane.

"There is a pecking order on who goes where," he said. "This is part of a family in the athletic department. If anything like this happens it affects many, many people. "



Nate Fleming (left) was a freshman walk-on; Daniel Lawson, a junior guard, had played in each of the Cowboys' games this season. AP



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In Washington, the National Transportation Safety Board said a team headed by board member John Hammerschmidt would fly to Colorado on Sunday morning to initiate the agency's investigation of the crash.

The Beechcraft King Air 200 turbo would be "less prone to get above the weather" than the other two planes chartered by the team, which were corporate jets, Stillwater airport manager Gary Johnson said.

Oklahoma State lost to Colorado 81-71 on Saturday.

"Tragedies catch you off guard and by surprise," Colorado basketball coach Ricardo Patton told KCNC-TV. "But you know I put my faith in God so every time we board the planes I think it's his will whether or not we make it back safely. My prayers go out to the families and Oklahoma State University."

In 1977, 14 University of Evansville basketball players and coach Bobby Watson were killed in a plane crash.

In 1970, 36 Marshall football players and 39 coaches, administrators, community leaders, fans and crew died when the school's chartered jet crashed. A month before, a plane carrying the Wichita State football team crashed in Colorado, killing 31 people.

The Victims

Bill Teegins, 48, play-by-play voice of the OSU Cowboys and sports director of KWTW in Oklahoma City. This was Teegin's 11th season with the Cowboys. He had been with KWTW 13 years.

Bjorn Falstrom, co-pilot.

Brian Luinstra, athletic trainer.

Denver Mills, pilot.

Jared Weiberg, student manager.

Kendall Durfey, broadcast engineer.

Nate Fleming, 6-0, 180, freshman guard, Edmond, Okla., North High School.

Pat Noyes, director of basketball operations.

Dan Lawson, 6-6, 205, junior guard, Detroit, Mich., MacKenzie High School.

Will Hancock, media relations coordinator. Hancock, whose father, Bill Hancock, is director of the NCAA men's basketball tournament, was a University of Kansas graduate who had been at OSU since October 1996.