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## Odin Lloyd's mother unconcerned with possible drop of murder conviction against Aaron Hernandez



Ursula Ward  
Odin Lloyd's mother



Associated Press

Apr 21, 2017



The mother of the man who former [New England Patriots](#) star Aaron Hernandez was convicted of killing says she is convinced justice was served even if the murder charge gets erased.



Courts in Massachusetts customarily vacate the convictions of defendants who die before their appeals are heard. Hernandez was serving a life sentence for killing Odin Lloyd when he hanged himself in his prison cell earlier this week.

Lloyd's mother, Ursula Ward, said Friday that a jury found Hernandez guilty of killing her son and that's good enough for her.

All first-degree murder convictions in Massachusetts trigger an automatic appeal. Hernandez's appeal was still in its early stages when he hanged himself.

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A quirk in Massachusetts law not only will cause Hernandez's murder conviction to be vacated but also will allow grievances over payment between the players' union and the Patriots to proceed.



[Judge rules to preserve Hernandez evidence](#)

A judge's ruling will bar prison officials from altering or destroying any potential evidence surrounding the death of ex-NFL star Aaron Hernandez.



[Hernandez's death ruled suicide; brain released](#)

The death of Aaron Hernandez, who was found hanging early Wednesday inside his maximum-security prison cell, has been ruled a suicide, according to the Worcester County (Mass.) DA's office.



Ward's lawyer is asking the Patriots and the NFL Players Association to voluntarily give her whatever money Hernandez might still be owed.

Attorney Doug Sheff told reporters he had issued a "friendly challenge" to the Patriots, who cut the tight end in 2013, the same year he killed Odin Lloyd.

Sheff said he thinks the team might have owed Hernandez up to \$6 million. The suit seeks to recover that plus proceeds from the eventual sale of Hernandez's \$1.3 million home, a Hummer and any other assets.

The team didn't immediately comment on his request.

Sheff is representing Ward in a wrongful-death lawsuit. He said Friday that he wants to be certain that any of Hernandez's assets go to help support Ward.

It's unclear what assets Hernandez had and how they might be distributed. Hernandez's fiancée and the couple's 4-year-old daughter also would have legal claims to his estate.

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Ward said Hernandez's suicide in prison has reopened old wounds and that she is reliving the pain of her son's murder.

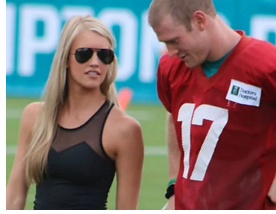
"I lost my son, the love of my life," Ward told reporters. "I'll never ever see him again."

Ward said she still forgives Hernandez and that she prays he found peace after hanging himself.



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# The return of the free-agent running back (sort of)



Jerick McKinnon's deal on a per-year basis is almost the same as that of Falcons running back Devonta Freeman.  
AP Photo/Matt Dunham



Jeremy Fowler  
ESPN Staff Writer

Mar 15, 2018



Running backs were not an afterthought in the first 48 hours of free-agency negotiations. The head of the Backs Need Love Too committee, [Todd Gurley](#), will take the small victory.

"[The market] is changing, brother -- we're back," Gurley declared from the Pro Bowl.

Not sure Gurley was hotly anticipating the free-agency status of [Jerick McKinnon](#), [Dion Lewis](#) and [Carlos Hyde](#) when he said that. But those guys did running backs everywhere a solid by landing multiyear deals worth between \$5 and \$7.5 million per year, despite failing to finish inside the league's top 10 in rushing.

The numbers signal at least mild progress for a position that needs it entering future negotiations with stars such as Gurley, [Le'Veon Bell](#) and [Ezekiel Elliott](#).

#### 2018 NFL free agency

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An NFL agent who negotiated a sizable tailback contract this week said the positional market hardly felt as devalued as it has been perceived.

"It was a good set of circumstances where you have a number of good players on the market with diverse skill sets and teams with cap space," the agent said. "Teams went into free agency with their guy in mind and what they were willing to spend. I'm pleased to see the group as a whole get an uptick."

McKinnon's new four-year, \$30 million deal with the [San Francisco 49ers](#) doubled that of [Latavius Murray](#), who was the highest-paid back in last year's free-agency period at \$15 million over three years. In Minnesota, Murray was the team's leading rusher ahead of McKinnon, who served mostly as a third-down back during his four years in purple.

But McKinnon's versatile skill set -- 991 total yards on 201 touches last year, including 51 receptions -- drew interest from multiple teams hoping to fill a major need. The 49ers were prepared to make McKinnon their feature back. Now, he's the league's fourth-highest-paid rusher on a per-year average. His deal includes \$11.7 million guaranteed at signing.

Considering the draft class is loaded with good running backs, that is a strong number. McKinnon's per-year payout is nearly on par with that of [Devonta Freeman](#) (\$8.25 million per year), despite the Atlanta Falcon gaining 1,928 more total yards over a four-year sample.

The 49ers are moving on from Hyde, who did just fine with a three-year, \$15 million deal (plus \$1 million incentive) from the [Cleveland Browns](#). Lewis parlayed a 940-yard rushing season with the [New England Patriots](#) into \$20 million plus incentives over four years with the [Tennessee Titans](#).

These numbers won't turn back the clock to 2011, or even 2016 when [Doug Martin](#) received a \$35 million deal. But the trio's potential average payout of \$6.29 million per year is well above the top three backs from last year. Murray, [Adrian Peterson](#) and [Eddie Lacy](#) averaged \$4.375 million annually on their 2017 deals, while Murray was the only one awarded a three-year contract. Peterson had to wait more than a month for a two-year pact from the [New Orleans](#)

[Saints](#), and Lacy's one-year agreement with the [Seattle Seahawks](#) included weight clauses. Both are free agents once again.

This year's uptick can be traced to tailbacks in their prime finding teams that play to their strengths. Hyde runs well out of shotgun formations, which the Browns will certainly run with [Tyrod Taylor](#) at quarterback. Lewis gains yards after contact. McKinnon's pass-catching ability should complement [Jimmy Garoppolo](#) well. The 49ers can line him up all over the formation as a receiver. [Isaiah Crowell](#), who signed for three years and \$12 million, gives the [New York Jets](#) a power back for the cold.

"Even if a guy's not an every-down back, if you're a team with running back as one of several needs, you'll spend good money for a player you know you can pair with a draft pick or another veteran in the backfield," said one NFL coach whose team was in the market for free-agent running backs.

Rushers around the league are hoping the slight growth is something more: an appreciation of the position's importance.

"The game has evolved," Gurley said. "You look at guys like Le'Veon. Back in the day, we used to be more run-run-run. Now it's kind of pass, and we want to get in on the fun, too."

Make no mistake, Bell's negotiations with Pittsburgh this offseason will be a true barometer for the health of the position. Bell's franchise tag is worth \$14.544 million, and he won't accept a long-term deal for less than that amount per year.

But if San Francisco can pay a running back \$7.5 million alongside fullback [Kyle Juszczyk](#) at \$5.25 million per year, perhaps hope remains for the high-priced workhorse.

"We do so much for an offense," Bell said in an interview last week. "We just want to be recognized for that work."



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