

Rick KLASSEN



KLASSEN, Rick

July 25, 1959 – December 10, 2016

With heavy hearts we announce the passing of Rick Klassen. He died peacefully in Maple Ridge Hospice on December 10, 2016 at the age of 57 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Rick was a son, nephew, brother, husband, father, uncle and grandfather. He was survived by his parents, George and Anna Klassen; his spouse, Debbie Fenrick; his children, Jill Klassen (Scott), Jay Klassen (Solana) and Chad Klassen (Melissa); his stepchildren, Kayla Fenrick (Sam), Kyle Fenrick (Kaelyn) and grandson Koen Fenrick; his sister Kathy Klassen; his nephew, Leyland Klassen (Heather) and grandniece Lily Klassen; his nieces, Danyue Klassen, Tanysha Klassen and Heleyna Klassen; and a large extended family. In Remembrance of Rick, a Celebration of Life will take place on January 21, 2017 at the Sheraton Guildford in Surrey, beginning at 2:00 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to the B.C. Cancer Agency.

Former CFL star Rick Klassen's brain autopsy reveals extensive trauma

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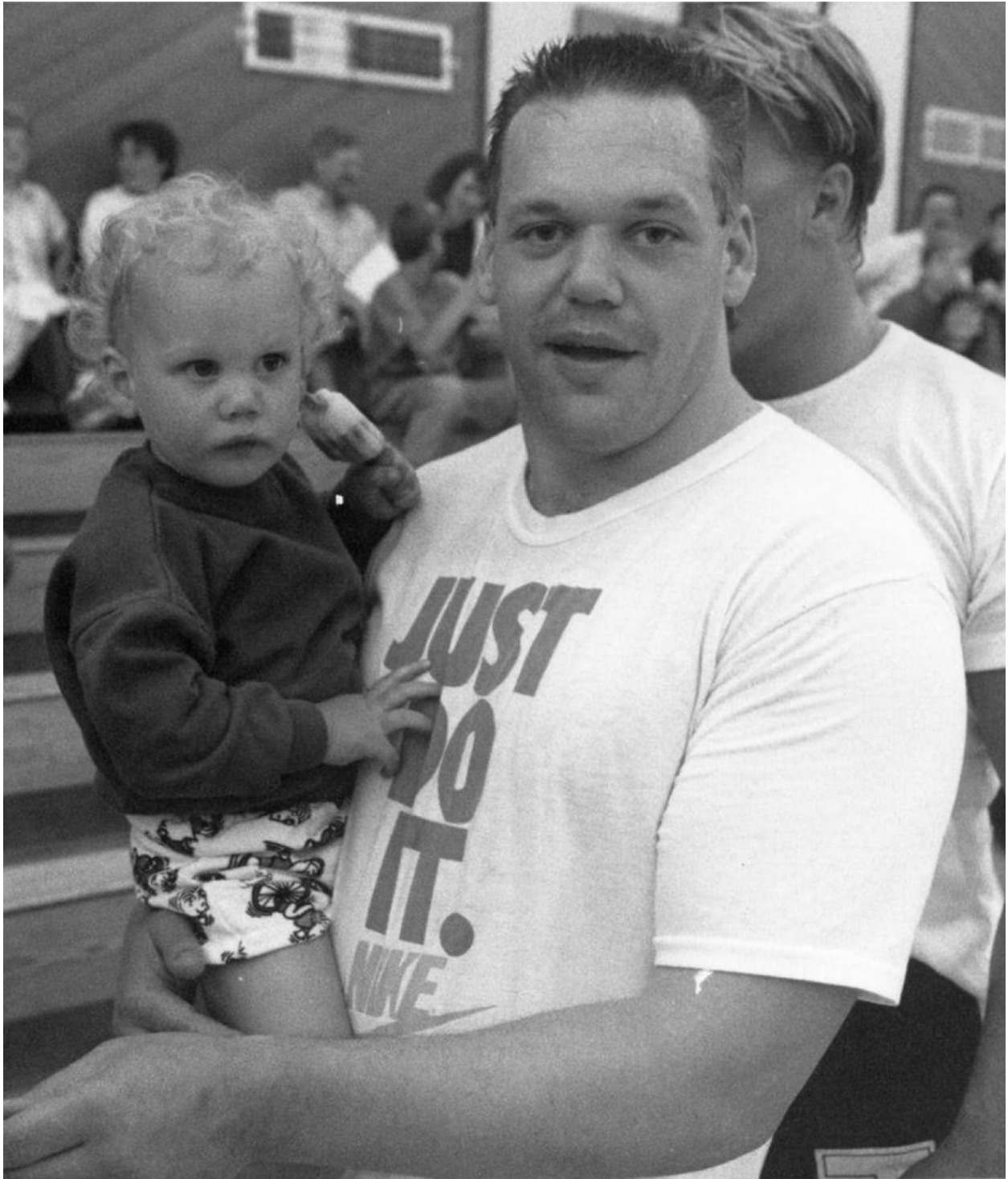
Researchers say extent of concussion-related disease some of the worst they've ever seen

[Karin Larsen](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 06, 2017 11:36 AM PT | Last Updated: July 6, 2017



Rick Klassen with sons Chad (left) and Jay (right). A brain autopsy of the former CFL lineman shows he had stage II CTE in combination with dementia. (Chad Klassen)

The brain autopsy of Rick Klassen shows the former CFL lineman had stage II levels of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) in combination with dementia.



Rick Klassen with his infant son Chad in 1988. Chad Klassen says the family was impacted by his father's depression and mood swings. Both can result from repeated concussion and CTE. (Chad Klassen)

"The extent of the CTE was a little bit surprising to be honest, the fact that talking to Dr. Hazrati that my dad was among the worst cases that she studied," said son Chad Klassen.

Neuropathologist Dr. Lili-Naz Hazrati conducted the autopsy on behalf of the Canadian Concussion Centre in Toronto.

She says the finding of CTE in combination with a type of dementia known as argyrophilic grain disease (AGD) has never been seen before.

'Not usually seen in patients that young'

"AGD is not usually seen in patients that young," she said. "Does it have anything to do with concussions? We can't say."

Chad Klassen said his father reported suffering three major concussions in his playing career, but thousands of micro concussions as a result of playing a position that required hitting on every play.



Rick Klassen with son Jay and father George in 1986. Klassen won the 1985 Grey Cup as a member of the B.C. Lions.

The defensive lineman was renowned for his toughness in his 10 year CFL career. He won a Grey Cup with the B.C. Lions in 1985 and was inducted into the Lions Wall of Fame in 2012.

Depression and memory problems

Rick Klassen made the decision to donate his brain to the Canadian Concussion Centre before he passed away.

He suffered from many of the symptoms associated with CTE and repeated concussion, including depression, memory problems and mood swings.

CTE is associated with an abnormal build up of tau protein in the brain, but can only be detected after death through an autopsy.

"It has been hard to hear these results, but they provide our family with some insight regarding the erratic behaviour and depression that he struggled with. They don't, however, diminish what we went through as a family," added Klassen.



Rick Klassen and daughter Jill at the Chilliwack Sports Hall of Fame. Klassen was born in Chilliwack. (Chad Klassen)

"My dad and the family want there to be more education out there so players know what they're facing, not only while they're playing the sport but after as well, because football careers are so short and you still have lots of life to live [after retirement]," he said.

Contact sports linked to CTE

According to Dr. Hazrati, the rate of CTE is higher in the brains of people who have played contact sports versus those who haven't.

"The reason we link these two things is because it's been reported in boxers, hockey and football players. It is assumed that because they have suffered a lot of blows to their head, that is what is causing the CTE."

Recently departed CFL commissioner [Jeffrey Orridge refused to acknowledge a link between football concussions and CTE](#), but Klassen hopes the results of his father's autopsy will help push the league to take the issue more seriously.

"The NFL has done a little bit better job than the CFL but hopefully those two leagues become a little bit more conscious of how their players are being impacted," he said.



Rick Klassen was voted a member of the B.C. Lions All-Time Dream Team. He retired in 1990 and died of cancer in 2016. (Rick Klassen/Facebook)

Former B.C. Lions standout Rick Klassen dies at 57 following battle with cancer

By Staff The Canadian Press

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Former BC Lions great Rick Klassen has died at the age of 57.

VANCOUVER – Defensive lineman Rick Klassen, who played 10 seasons in the CFL including nine with the [B.C. Lions](#), has died at 57 following a battle with cancer.

The Lions confirmed Klassen's death Saturday on the team's official Twitter account.

The BC Lions are saddened to report the former defensive lineman Rick Klassen has passed away. Our thoughts are with his family.

Klassen, from Sardis, B.C., was drafted as an offensive guard by the Lions in 1981, but was converted to a defensive lineman in his rookie season.

He was named the most valuable Canadian of the 1983 Grey Cup, though the Lions lost the title match 18-17 to the Toronto Argonauts.

Two years later he got a chance to hoist the iconic trophy when the Lions downed the Hamilton Tiger-Cats 37-24 to take the 1985 Grey Cup.

Klassen joined the Saskatchewan Roughriders for the 1988 season before returning to the Lions for the final two years of his career. he announced his retirement after the 1990 season.

Over a span of 160 CFL games, Klassen recorded 66 sacks and added another four and a half in two Grey Cup appearances.

Klassen was voted a member of the Lions' All-Time Dream Team in 2003 as part of the team's 50th anniversary celebrations. He was inducted into the B.C. Lions Wall of Fame in 2007 as part of the Lions' 1985 Grey Cup team.