

as part of The Silent Years project

# CTE IN ATHLETES

---

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is a neurodegenerative disease commonly found in athletes who participate in contact sport and are exposed to potential head trauma. There is currently no treatment for the disease and it can only be identified by examining brain tissue after death.

There is an urgent need for a way to detect CTE during life.

# ROD TAYLOR

September 9, 1943

-

April 16, 2017

## BIOGRAPHY

A keen footballer throughout his youth, Rod Taylor began his professional career on the south coast. He signed with Portsmouth at the age of 17, going on to play at Fratton Park for two seasons playing as a wing-half. He was known to be a tough tackler who had a good footballing brain.

After his career had finished, Taylor remained involved in football as a member of the Portsmouth Former Players Association.

Taylor passed away in Poole Hospital on 16th April 2017, from Alzheimer's. After his death, his brain was donated and examined by the neuropathologist Dr Willie Stewart. The examination confirmed Taylor was suffering from dementia and CTE.

The Taylor family is convinced repeated heading and collisions caused his death. Taylor's career in football started in his childhood and carried on up to when he played in non-league until the age of 50. The family donated Rod's brain to inform future players of the risks of brain disease, and they are working alongside the Jeff Astle foundation.

# RYAN FREEL

March 8, 1976

-

December 22, 2012

## BIOGRAPHY

**Making** his Major League Baseball debut in 2001 for the Toronto Blue Jays, Ryan Freel was an American professional baseball player whose MLB career finished in 2009. A utility player, Freel was capable of playing second base, third base, and all three outfield positions.

Playing for the Baltimore Orioles in 2009, Freel was hit in the head by a pickoff throw while on second base. He was put on the disabled list after the injury and officially declared his retirement a year later.

On December 22, 2012, Freel, at his home in Florida, took his own life. His family donated his brain tissue for research into CTE after his death. In 2013, a post-mortem examination showed that he was suffering from Stage II CTE.

This made Freel the first MLB player in history to have been diagnosed with the disease.

Ryan Freel was also diagnosed with several mental illnesses that are reported to be consistent with athletes suffering from CTE, once their playing careers are finished.

# RICK MARTIN

July 26, 1951

-

March 13, 2011

## BIOGRAPHY

**Richard** Lionel Martin was a Canadian professional ice hockey player. Martin played in the NHL for the Buffalo Sabres and Los Angeles Kings for a total of 11 seasons between 1971 and 1982. He played in the position of left wing.

In 1978, Dave Farrish of the New York Rangers hooked Martin from behind around the neck and tackled Martin's feet, causing him to hit his head on the ice and be knocked unconscious. He was known not to wear a helmet for most of his career but began doing so after this incident.

Rick Martin died on March 13, 2011 in New York from a heart attack. Analysis by the Boston University later revealed he had Stage II CTE.

The damage is believed to have stemmed from the severe concussion Martin sustained in 1978.

He is the first non-enforcer to have been diagnosed with the disease proving hockey players who don't engage in fighting may still be at risk of CTE.

# KEVIN TURNER

June 12, 1969

-

March 24, 2016

## BIOGRAPHY

**Kevin** Turner was a professional American football fullback. He played eight seasons in the NFL for the New England Patriots and Philadelphia Eagles.

Turner was diagnosed with CTE in June 2010, and promised to donate his brain and spinal cord when he died. After his diagnosis, he supported research looking for a connection between CTE, ALS and head trauma related to American football.

In a major lawsuit filed by ex players against the National Football League (NFL) regarding the health risks of concussions in American football, Turner assisted as a lead plaintiff.

On 24th March 2014, Turner died in his home in Alabama. Later that year in November, the Brain CTE Center at Boston University announced that Turner's death was caused by CTE.

Researchers at the Boston University say Turner's clinical diagnosis is ALS and the cause of the disease was motor neuron cell death triggered by CTE. Turner had the most advanced stage of CTE when he died.

# BARRY TAYLOR

June 16, 1935

-

April 24, 2013

## BIOGRAPHY

**The** son of an Australian boxer, Barry Taylor and his family moved to Manly when he was 8-years-old. Described as a natural at sports, Taylor began playing Rugby Union in the winter. He went on to play 235 games for Manly and spent 19 years in Australia playing rugby.

Not known to be the biggest player on the field, Taylor was described to be one of the toughest.

Taylor started developing early signs of dementia in his late 50s and near to the end of this life he was suffering from severe memory loss.

After he died aged 77, Taylor's brain was donated to the brain bank at Boston University for researchers to use it as part of a study testing for CTE.

On March 24, 2018, the Taylor family attended the launch of the Australian Sports Brain Bank. They are hopeful the bank will be a great success and are supporting it in finding methods to treat the disease to prevent other sportsmen/women's families having to go through what they did.