

Marblehead Gridiron Club to start scholarship to honor former standout

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This past Sunday, friends and family of the late Marblehead High School and Northeastern University football standout David Borne, gathered for a toast at Maddie's Sail Loft to commemorate the 30 year anniversary of his passing. A few days prior to the toast, David's brother, Steve announced that a scholarship would be created in David's name by the town's Gridiron Club to remember him by, and bring awareness to CTE (Chronic traumatic encephalopathy), a disease caused by repeated blows to the head, which is now known to be the cause behind David's death.

David took his own life in 1992, but it was just recently learned that he developed CTE from his time spent playing football at the high school and collegiate level. His death was felt heavily throughout the Marblehead community, and left many friends, family, and former teammates feeling shocked, confused, and unable to understand what had happened to David.

Now after years of unanswered questions, those who were close with David have been given a piece of mind and closure, knowing that his death was the result of severe brain damage suffered from playing the game he loved.

David Willis was one of his teammates and good friends at Marblehead High School in the late '70s. When Willis learned of David's passing, he had a difficult time accepting it.

"It was just so hard to understand or comprehend," Willis said. "That's why hearing some of the clarity with the CTE, we didn't know about it back then."

The toast to David brought former teammates, friends, and family from across the country and New England together to celebrate his extraordinary life and to kick off fundraising for the scholarship. In the back corner of the bar was a board, complete with newspaper



PHOTO | STEVE BORNE

David Borne was a multi-sport standout at Marblehead High School and pursued football at Northeastern University and the University of Rhode Island.

photos and articles from David's days as a football and basketball player. Underneath was his old Northeastern University football jersey that he sneakily took with him as a souvenir after graduation.

David was a part of the 1977 Marblehead High School Football team that is widely regarded as one of, if not the best team in school history. It was a special group that year, the team went 8-2 and many argue that the team should have been playing for the state championship. David was not only a captain, but was a key player in the Magicians' success as well. He was highly respected amongst his teammates, coaches, and fans alike.

David was known for his hard-hitting plays on special teams, and although he might not have been the most athletic player on the field, Willis notes that he never settled.

"David didn't want to play Division three football or Division two football, he wanted to play Division I AA," Willis said. "He wasn't the best player, he wasn't the biggest kid, but that was him. He was one of the key guys, he was a leader."

The star athlete didn't stop on the gridiron. That same year, David was also the starting point guard for the Marblehead High Basketball team that won the Division II North Sectionals. The team made a deep

run in the state tournament before falling in the semi-finals and David was a key piece during his team's magical run.

David played with a high motor and played angry on the field, but off the field, he was one of the nicest people you could ever meet. Steve said that his brother "did not know cliques", befriend anyone and everyone, and was beloved throughout the high school.

His charisma continued to infect others after high school. David continued to chase his football dream and went on to do a postgraduate year at New Hampton Prep before going to play at Northeastern University and the University of Rhode Island.

A few years before his passing, David started his own business, Blazer Distribution, that focused on getting companies to start recycling and minimize waste. Helping to keep the Earth clean became a huge passion of his and those that knew him know that whether it was football, or trying to make his home a better place, David was going to put 110 percent into everything he did.

The scholarship was officially kicked off this past Sunday with the first few donations coming from those attending the toast at Maddie's. With the recent breakthroughs in research on brain trauma in athletes, especially football players, Steve and Willis hope that the scholarship will help continue to raise awareness of CTE, as well as serving as a remembrance of an amazing person that was lost too soon.

"In the idea of a scholarship, why not?" Willis said. "He died playing football. With suicide, you kind of forget about the person, and I always said to myself 'there should be something in memory of this guy.'"

Contributions to the scholarship can be made out to the Marblehead Gridiron Club, PO box 505, Marblehead, Massachusetts. 01945 and those that donate are kindly asked to write David Borne in the memo of the check.