



The night before Fred McNeill died in November, he was watching "Monday Night Football." The 63-year-old former Minnesota Viking linebacker and UCLA grad had his gold and blue slippers tucked under his bed. "He loved the game," said his youngest son, Gavin. "He was proud of what he did."

Yet the very same game had robbed so much from him.

McNeill had transitioned from playing 12 years of professional football into family life. He had a wife, Tia, and two young sons, Fred Jr. and Gavin. After playing in two Super Bowls, he spent his last NFL season studying law and eventually became a partner with a firm in Minneapolis.

McNeill was easygoing and kind. His older son, Fred Jr., remembers him as "our first best friend. He was Superman." Gavin said he coached them in all things: football, baseball, basketball, life.

As his wife said, "Fred did everything. He played ball, went to law school, prepared for life after football. We had the kids. It was a good life, and then it changed."

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