



FOOTBALL BROTHERHOOD

If you're getting this email, you are a former BC student-athlete who has recently or not so recently turned forty. And, if you're like the two of us, you find yourself thinking more about your health and wellness as the years tick by. We're reaching out to share a new resource for our community – the [Concussion & CTE Foundation HelpLine for Boston College Athletic Alumni](#).

As former Eagle football players, we and many of our teammates have become particularly concerned about brain health, given the relatively recent discovery of a devastating neurodegenerative disease called Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE).

CTE is caused by repetitive head trauma, including concussions and nonconcussive impacts, the very type of head trauma regularly experienced by those of us who played contact sports twenty or more years ago.

When we were competitive athletes, it was truly a different era, as concussions/hard hits were not well understood, tackling/blocking with the crown of the helmet was encouraged, we hit live Monday through Thursday to earn the right to get on the field on Saturday, and there were no concussion protocols in place to protect athletes from long term harm caused by concussions.

Now, there are new rules to prevent head-to-head contact (Targeting), new equipment to protect the head (state of the art helmets, protective caps for practice), minimal live hitting during the practices between games, and a clear understanding of concussions as well as how to handle them (no more getting a whiff of smelling salts and begging the trainer to 'get me back in there').

For sure, athletes with a history of concussions are at risk for developing CTE, but athletes with few to no diagnosed concussions can also develop CTE from repeated, nonconcussive head trauma, the type of seemingly innocuous helmet-to-helmet impacts football players from our era experienced every day in practice and in games.

Currently, CTE can only be diagnosed by examining the brain after death, but the behavioral symptoms of CTE can be recognized in the living, and these symptoms often surface many years after the head trauma that caused them occurred.

Behavioral symptoms of CTE include:

- Impulse control problems
- Aggression
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Paranoia
- Anxiety

Cognitive symptoms of CTE include disorders of thinking and memory, such as:

- Executive dysfunction
- Impaired judgment
- Short term memory problems
- Dementia

You may not realize you're experiencing these symptoms, but your spouse and close friends - people who know you well - may notice these behavioral changes in you.

In August 2022, one of our beloved teammates, Scott Harrington, did the unthinkable by taking his own life. News of Scott's passing shocked the BC community, the Wall Street community, and the Greenwich Connecticut community.

Scott was enormously successful as a BC student-athlete and Captain of the fourth-ranked 1985 Cotton Bowl Championship team. He was enormously successful in his business career as a JP Morgan Executive. And Scott was enormously successful as an active community servant in his hometown of Greenwich.

Of course, Scott's wife Kathy and his two sons, Jack and Scooter, were most shocked by Scott's sudden passing. To them, he was the ultimate husband, father, and leader of their family. When he took his own life, he was not the man they knew.

Everyone was shocked by the news of Scott's passing and asked themselves, "How could this happen?"

When we and Scott's other Eagle football teammates asked ourselves this question, we believed in our gut that we knew the answer. We believed Scott suffered from CTE and didn't know it.

In the days that preceded Scott's death, Kathy noticed that Scott had started acting uncharacteristically. Together, they decided to seek help from a mental healthcare professional. They found a therapist and locked in an appointment for the earliest available time slot, more than a month away.

Kathy and Scott had a plan to tackle his mental health challenges. She and her boys knew Scott was a winner, an achiever. He'd spent a lifetime meeting challenges and overcoming adversity. They were sure that Scott would overcome this difficult situation. But, Scott took his life before he could see that therapist.

Scott and Kathy urgently needed help, as soon as Scott started acting unlike himself, but they didn't have a professional resource to get that immediate help. It didn't exist.

Now it does.

We are writing to inform you about a new resource that is available to you and your loved ones, so that you may get immediate help from a mental health professional, when you need it.

The [Concussion & CTE Foundation Helpline for Boston College Athletic Alumni](#) is a free resource referral service offering personalized medical and mental health provider recommendations, access to the latest information about symptoms and treatment options, and connections to a large network of community support.

We've partnered with the Concussion & CTE Foundation to utilize their unique expertise in CTE and the resources they have already developed to help people who suffer from CTE-related mental health issues.

Please review the documents in the link below, where you will find information explaining the symptoms of CTE and the ways to identify them. Should you or someone close to you need help, there are two ways to get it:

1. You can fill out the [Helpline form here](#) and mention Boston College. That confidential form will go directly to the Concussion & CTE Foundation. Your information will not be shared with any third-party organizations without your explicit consent except in cases where there is imminent risk of harm to self or someone else, or where otherwise required by law. Their team will respond within **3 business days** by text, email, or scheduled phone appointment.
2. If you want or need immediate mental health support, as in "Right Now," call the 24-hour line **617-934-1022** to connect with a trained professional at partner organization [Intent Clinical](#). Mention the Concussion & CTE Foundation HelpLine for Boston College Athletic Alumni. Intent Clinical's team, including full-time licensed therapists skilled in dealing with these situations, will be available to you for immediate help such as wellness checks, virtual or in person support, and psychological assessments. Their team will respond within **20 minutes**.

Several Intent Clinical services are available to you at no cost. An Eagle Football Alum has made a donation to cover any professional fees.

The [Concussion & CTE Foundation Helpline for Boston College Athletic Alumni](#) is available to former athletes from any of BC's 31 varsity sports who need help. It is also available to your family members, who may be navigating the outcomes of brain injury.

The Concussion & CTE Foundation is the world leader in CTE research, awareness, and patient advocacy and is already supporting members of the BC community. They work with the Boston University CTE Center, which has diagnosed five deceased former Boston College football players with CTE already, including John Frechette and Ron Perryman (shared with the permission of their families).

Please share this email and link with your former teammates who may not have received this announcement as our goal is to continue BC's mantra of "Men & Women for Others", especially in their/your time of need.

Please also share this email and resource with your spouse and with your family and close friends - people who know you and may notice behavioral changes in you that may signal your need for help. Our loved ones might notice behavioral changes in us before we notice them.

Even though we may be years removed from our time as competitive athletes, many of us still live with a competitive athlete's mentality. We don't want to ask for help with our challenges; we want to grind it out, as it were. We are trained to compete, to overcome adversity. In that sense, we are all like Scott Harrington.

As Scott's BC wife Kathy said to us, "His death will not be in vain if we can help other BC athletes identify and treat mental health issues".

Sincerely,

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