

Dec. 18, 2019

--USC FOOTBALL/BASEBALL STAR REX JOHNSTON, WHO PLAYED IN NFL AND MLB, DIES

LOS ANGELES--Rex Johnston, a two-sport star at USC in the 1950s who played in both the NFL and major leagues, died on Sunday (Dec. 15) in Los Angeles of heart failure. He was 82.

Johnston had the distinction of playing for Pittsburgh's pro football and baseball teams when he was a halfback and returned punts and kickoffs for the Steelers in 1960 and then was an outfielder for 14 games with the Pirates in 1964 (he was in the minor league system of the Pirates and San Francisco Giants from 1959 to 1966).

He and Morris "Red" Badgro are the only Trojans to play in the NFL and MLB. Badgro played with MLB's St. Louis Browns (1929-30) and the NFL's New York Yankees (1927-28), New York Giants (1930-35) and Brooklyn Dodgers (1936).

Johnston played both football and baseball at USC. He lettered as a football halfback for three seasons (1956-58), leading the Trojans in rushing (304 yards), scoring (25 points) and interceptions (1) in 1957 as a junior. He was a two-year (1958-59) letterman outfielder for USC's baseball team. He hit .374 with 26 RBI as a junior on the 1958 team that won the College World Series (he scored the game-winning run in the 12th inning in the championship game) and then made the All-Conference team as a 1959 senior when he batted .347 with 7 home runs and a team-best 37 RBI.

After his playing days, he ran an industrial painting business in Southern California.

He is survived by his wife Sandy, his sons Ty, Rex Jr. and Brett and his daughter, Cynthia.

A celebration of his life will be held at a later date.