

USC Athletics



Ex-USC, NFL Linebacker David Lewis Dies
Football

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LOS ANGELES — David Lewis, an All-Conference outside linebacker at USC who made a game-changing play in the Trojans' legendary comeback win over Notre Dame in their 1974 national championship season and then was a key member of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' historic 1979 team that reached the NFC title game, died on Tuesday (July 14) in Tampa, Fla. He was 65 and had struggled with health issues in recent years.

Lewis was a 3-year (1974-76) letterman at USC, having previously played at Lincoln High in San Diego and San Diego City College. After the Trojans won the national crown in 1974, they were runners-up in the polls in 1976 when Lewis was an All-Pac-8 first team pick. In 1975, he led USC in tackles (90), tackles for loss (12) and fumble recoveries (4). He was on USC teams that won a pair of Rose Bowls (1975 and 1977) and the 1975 Liberty Bowl.

In the 1974 game versus Notre Dame, in which the Trojans trailed 24-0 just prior to halftime before scoring 55 unanswered points for the victory, Lewis' crushing hit of Irish kick returner Mark McLane at the 8-yard line on ND's first kickoff return of the second half helped turn the game around.

Lewis was the second round pick by the Buccaneers in the 1977 NFL Draft and spent 5 years (1977-81) with the team. He played in the 1980 Pro Bowl. The 1979 Tampa Bay team, which posted 10 regular season victories after having won just 7 games in the franchise's previous 3 seasons, captured the NFC Central division title and won the first playoff game in franchise history before falling in the NFC championship game.

He also played for the San Diego Chargers in 1982 and Los Angeles Rams in 1983.

He then had a long career as a high school football coach, including as the head coach at Tampa Catholic High (1986-90) with a 33-19 record and a district title. He was on the Tampa Catholic staff upon his passing.

Lewis is survived by his wife and a daughter, and predeceased by a son.

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