

Former Bison great and New York Giants receiver Stacy Robinson dies at 50

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By: **Jeff Kolpack**, INFORUM



Stacy Robinson

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“I’ve been really proud of our players,” said Don Morton, Robinson’s coach on the 1983 national championship team. “They’ve rallied around him the last couple of days.”

Robinson was in the final year of a three-year term with the North Dakota State University Alumni Association Board of Directors and was selected to serve another three-year term. A battle with cancer, he told fellow board members, gave him a different perspective on life and that he was going to make NDSU a priority.

He had just undergone a bone marrow transplant for multiple myeloma and recovery was looking good. An appearance at homecoming this fall was on the agenda. But on Tuesday night, his college friends and family were mourning his death at the age of 50.

“So young, such a wonderful man,” said former teammate Mike Favor. “An incredible Bison.”

He leaves behind a legacy at NDSU that included track and field and a receiver on the ’83 title team. In all, he owned three title rings: one with NDSU and two with the New York Giants, who won two Super Bowls in his six years with the team. He went on to work for the NFL for the Players Association including a stint as the Director of Player Development. Through it all, he didn’t lose touch with his former Bison teammates.

“Phone calls, emails, same old Stace,” Favor said. “He always wanted to know how you were doing first.”

There was a lot of talent on those Bison teams, like former Denver Broncos defensive back Tyrone Braxton. They went after it in practice, Favor said.

“Classic battles,” he said. “They were some of the funniest times and some of the most intense work I had ever seen.”

Robinson, from St. Paul, was a second-round draft choice of the Giants in 1984, just a few months after helping NDSU to its title. He played in 43 career games, catching 48 passes for 749 yards and seven touchdowns.

At NDSU, he played in 31 games, catching 88 passes for 1,626 yards and 13 touchdowns. It was also in an era when the Bison operated the run-first veer option offense.

“Anybody who played us one-on-one on him was asking for trouble,” said former teammate and running back Chad Stark. “He had everything in balance. And I loved that quote from Gary Barta.”

The quote from Barta, now the athletic director at the University of Iowa, was on Robinson’s CaringBridge website, Barta relayed the story of him being a “hotshot” quarterback out of high school working out with Robinson in summer workouts. Robinson told Barta to take a five-step drop and throw it as far as he could, which Barta did.

“I threw it as hard as I could ... and under threw you by 10 yards,” Barta wrote.

The CaringBridge website said services will be planned in Maryland and Minnesota with details to come.

“He was such a saint,” Morton said. “He had so much to offer. He led an exemplary life.”

And he was fast. Morton said Robinson was clocked at 4.25 seconds in his pro tryout.

“That was unheard of in those days,” Morton said. “You look at that ’83 team with Stark and Bentrin and to have that speed at wide receiver just opened up the running game for us.”

Former NFL coach Tony Dungy, on his Twitter account, called Robinson “one of the good guys. A great man.”

Giants co-owner John Mara said in a statement: “He was a good man who was loved and respected by his teammates and everyone in this organization. His work on behalf of the Players Association was of great benefit to many players.”

Giants' Tom Coughlin, Phil Simms remember the late Stacy Robinson

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By **Mike Garafolo/The Star-Ledger**



Scott Lituchy/The Star-Ledger Giants coach Tom Coughlin, who served as the team's wide receivers coach for

a portion of Stacy Robinson's time with the team, recalled the late Robinson as a "class act."

The memories of the late Stacy Robinson, the former **Giants** wide receiver **who passed away earlier this week**, have begun to pour in.

"He was a class act who was always a real, real pleasure to be around," Giants coach Tom Coughlin, Robinson's position coach from 1988-90, said in quotes provided by the team today. "Stacy was just a great guy to coach. Great guy to be with, be around. He was always positive, always thinking in terms of how he could help benefit the rest of us, the team."

According to a **journal posting on Robinson's page on the website CaringBridge.org**, the 50-year-old was suffering from multiple melanoma and passed away peacefully on Tuesday evening.

"We always hear that 'so and so' is a nice guy, but it really was true about Stacy," former Giants quarterback Phil Simms said. "He might be one of the few people that I've ever met or known that everybody truly liked. I think that's just personality. He could get along with everybody, no matter what the situation. Stacy had a tremendous sense of humor and if you were going to say something about him, you better get ready, because man it was coming back fast. He was so quick it was hilarious. He was definitely a match for a guy like Bill Parcells or anybody that has that really quick wit."

Simms shared many memories of Robinson, including a 49-yard catch against the San Francisco 49ers on Monday Night Football in 1986 that set up the winning touchdown.

"If we had the rules that we have now, they would have reviewed it and Stacy's catch would have been a touchdown," Simms said. "But they marked it on about the half-foot line. That was a huge catch."

Of course, Simms recalls Robinson's big day in Super Bowl XXI, when he caught three passes for 62 yards, none bigger than a 36-yard reception in the fourth quarter.

"Stacy and I must've talked 10 times during the Super Bowl. We looked at each other and I'd go, 'I know it's there, Stacy. I'm trying to get it to you.' I couldn't get to him," Simms recalled. "Finally, in the fourth quarter I threw that seam pass down the left sideline and hit him after he and I had been talking about it for three quarters. So we hit it – I think it's even on TV – you see us walk by and give each other a really vigorous hand slap because, 'All right, there, we finally got that one done.' We had talked about it on the bench, during timeouts and in the huddle. We knew there were certain plays that I could throw to him where he knew he was going to be wide open, but we just couldn't get to him."

Said Coughlin, "Stacy was very smart, logical, he understood the big picture and he reinforced what you believed in as a coach – the hard work and the effort. He was always a great team guy who was very supportive of his teammates. He was a pro. He worked his butt off. You could always talk to him. Whether he was a starter or a backup or however it worked out, once he understood, he was very supportive."

Simms said he never recalls Robinson, who most recently served as the NFL Players Association's director of player development, being in a "down mood," which he can't say about anyone.

"We all have mood swings. I'm sure he had them, but it never showed," Simms said. "He always had that little smile on his face. It's funny, he did get a little heavy after his playing career. So that was the butt of many jokes and it didn't faze him. Like I said, he had the ammo ready. Man, he would tear up anybody that started picking on him. I think that's how most people remember him and that's why so many people thought so highly of him."

Robinson is survived by his wife, Nadine, his sons Stacy, Myles, and Marquis, his sisters Candace and Kim, his brothers Leighton and Ramonn.