

# Lyle Alzado, 43, Fierce Lineman Who Turned Steroid Foe, Is Dead

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Published: May 15, 1992

Lyle Alzado, the Brooklyn-born former lineman whose fierce play for the Los Angeles Raiders made him the apotheosis of ferocity and who later became a self-styled symbol of the dangers of steroid abuse, died yesterday at his home in Portland, Ore.

He was 43 years old.

Dr. Thomas DeLoughery said Mr. Alzado died of complications of a rare form of brain cancer, which was diagnosed a year ago and which the athlete attributed to his years of taking massive doses of steroids to build and maintain a formidable physique.

Until he was stricken he had been regarded as the picture of physical perfection. Alzado was 6 feet 3 inches and weighed 260 pounds when he was a two-time All-Pro defensive end who was named the National Football League's defensive player of the year with the Denver Broncos in 1977. Warned Against Steroid Use

Since his illness was diagnosed, Mr. Alzado, who worked as an actor after his retirement, had lost 90 pounds and had used himself as an example to warn of the dangers of using both steroids and human growth hormones, which he said he took for 16 weeks before an abortive attempt at a comeback with the Raiders in 1990.

Although there is no medical evidence that links steroid use to brain cancer, Mr. Alzado, who said he had begun using steroids in college and had become so addicted to them that he continued to use them after his retirement in 1986, never had any doubt.

Because brain cancer is often associated with AIDS, his doctors have taken pains to point out that extensive testing had established conclusively that Mr. Alzado had neither AIDS nor the virus that causes it.

Mr. Alzado, who was born in Brooklyn on April 3, 1949, was a star at Lawrence (L.I.) High School, and was later selected as a Little All-American for his play with Yankton College in South Dakota.

Although he was a standout from the time he was drafted by the Broncos in 1971, Alzado, who was traded to the Cleveland Browns in 1979, did not rise to full stardom until he was traded to the Raiders in 1982 at what should have been the twilight of his career.

Instead, he was unleashed by the Raiders' owner, Al Davis, and their coach, Tom Flores, who, he said, encouraged his naturally "aggressive" style. Games Transformed Him

Mr. Alzado, who could be the mildest of men off the field, was transformed when play began. On one occasion, he became so enraged when he thought someone had hit him below the belt during a playoff game against the Jets that he ripped the helmet off a startled Jets lineman, Chris Ward, and threw it at him, inspiring the so-called Alzado rule barring such acts.

Mr. Alzado was not always docile away from football. His first wife blamed the breakup of their marriage on Mr. Alzado's unpredictable behavior, which she attributed to his use of steroids.

Mr. Alzado, who once estimated that he spent as much as \$30,000 a year buying steroids at gyms around the country, did not dispute the assessment.

For all his undeniable ferocity, the picture many fans will always carry of Mr. Alzado showed a distinctly different side of his nature. It occurred toward the end of the Raiders'

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roust of the Washington Redskins in the 1984 Super Bowl, when the television cameras lingered on the image of the hulking lineman standing on the sideline, his first and only Super Bowl victory at hand and tears streaming down his cheeks.

His survivors include his second wife, Kathy Davis, and a son, Justin, from his first marriage.

Photo: Lyle Alzado (Chris Covatta, 1990)

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