

**Jim Brown, football great and activist,  
dies at 87**

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# **Jim Brown, one of football's greatest ever, dies at 87**





Jim Brown, one of the greatest professional and college football players of all time, has died. He was 87.



His wife, Monique, announced Brown's death in an Instagram post Friday afternoon. She said Brown "passed peacefully" Thursday night in their home in Los Angeles.



"To the world he was an activist, actor, and football star," the [post stated](#). "To our family he was a loving and wonderful husband, father, and grandfather. Our hearts are broken..."

In 2020, Brown was selected to the NFL 100 all-time team and also was ranked as the No. 1 all-time player on the College Football 150 list to celebrate those sports' anniversaries. He was named the greatest football player ever by the Sporting News in 2002.

#### EDITOR'S PICKS



[A look back at Jim Brown's life and legacy in photos](#)

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[The 150 greatest players in college football history: Jim Brown is No. 1](#)

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Brown, who was selected in the first round of the 1957 draft, played nine seasons for the [Cleveland Browns](#) (1957-65) and led the league in rushing eight of those years. He rushed for 12,312 yards and averaged 5.2 yards per carry over his career. He also was named a Pro Bowler every year he played. He led the Browns to the league championship game three times, winning the title in 1964, and was named MVP three times.

He ran for at least 100 yards in 58 of his 118 regular-season games, never missing a game. He rushed for more than 1,000 yards in seven seasons, including 1,527 yards in one 12-game season and 1,863 in a 14-game season.

Brown also worked to empower the Black community during the Civil Rights Movement. In June 1967, Brown organized "The Cleveland Summit," a meeting

of the nation's top Black athletes, including Bill Russell and Lew Alcindor -- who later became Kareem Abdul-Jabbar -- to support boxer Muhammad Ali's fight against serving in Vietnam. In later years, Brown worked to curb gang violence in Los Angeles and in 1988 founded Amer-I-Can, a program to help disadvantaged inner-city youth and ex-convicts.

Brown also advocated for modern athletes to be more involved in the Black community.

In a statement, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell called Brown a "gifted athlete" who "became a forerunner and role model for athletes being involved in social initiatives outside their sports."

"It's impossible to describe the profound love and and gratitude we feel for having the opportunity to be a small piece of Jim's incredible life and legacy," the Browns [said in a statement](#). "We mourn his passing, but celebrate the indelible light he brought to the world."

"Our hearts are with Jim's family, loved ones, and all those he impacted along the way."

#### What They're Saying ...

**LeBron James:** "We lost a hero today. Rest in Paradise to the legend Jim Brown. I hope every Black athlete takes the time to educate themselves about this incredible man and what he did to change all of our lives. We all stand on your shoulders Jim Brown. If you grew up in Northeast Ohio and were Black, Jim Brown was a God. As a kid who loved football, I really just thought of him as the greatest Cleveland Brown to ever play. Then I started my own journey as a professional athlete and realized what he did socially was his true greatness. When I choose to speak out, I always think about Jim Brown. I can only speak because Jim broke down those walls for me."

**Barack Obama:** "I was too young to remember Jim Brown's playing days, but I knew his legacy. One of the greatest football players ever, he was also an actor and activist -- speaking out on civil rights, and pushing other Black athletes to do the same. Our thoughts are with Jim's wife Monique, his children, and everyone who knew and admired him."

**Emmitt Smith:** "My heart aches at this very moment after hearing of the passing of Jim Brown. He is and was a true legend in sports and in the community using his platform to help others. Thanks King."

**Barry Sanders:** "You can't underestimate the impact Jim Brown had on the NFL. He will be greatly missed. Additionally, his generosity and friendship with my family is a gift that we will always treasure. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Brown Family & Browns fans at this time."

**Tony Dorsett:** "There isn't a man who played running back in the NFL who didn't see Jim Brown as an iconic legend on and off the field. Rest easy, my brother."

Brown retired at 30, at the top of his career. He was filming the movie "The Dirty Dozen" during the offseason in 1966, and production went long because of bad weather. Browns owner Art Modell threatened to suspend Brown's pay if he didn't report to training camp on time. Brown opted to retire, saying he wanted

to focus on his movie career and social issues.

Since his retirement, no Browns player has worn his No. 32, and a statue of him went up outside of FirstEnergy Stadium in 2016.

"It's a great moment," Brown said when the statue was unveiled, "because I feel it throughout my body, particularly in my heart and mind."

Current Browns owners Jimmy and Dee Haslam called Brown "a true icon" for the NFL.

"He was certainly the greatest to ever put on a Browns uniform and arguably one of the greatest players in NFL history," a statement released Friday read. "Jim was one of the reasons the Browns have such a tremendous fan base today. So many people grew up watching him just dominate every time he stepped onto the football field but his countless accolades on the field only tell a small part of his story."

Brown lettered in four sports (football, lacrosse, basketball and track) during his college career at Syracuse, and he is also considered one of the greatest lacrosse players of all time, once scoring five goals in one half of a collegiate all-star game.

At Syracuse, Brown also served as the place-kicker during one game against Colgate in 1956, scoring an NCAA single-game record with 43 points on six touchdowns and seven extra points. That same season, he led the nation in rushing touchdowns. In 1955, he led the nation in kickoff return average. Overall, he rushed for 2,091 yards and scored 26 TDs for the Orange.

"When Jim Brown's name was announced in a room, other Hall of Famers stood and applauded him," Pro Football Hall of Fame president Jim Porter said in a statement. "His persona has stood the test of time -- a fearless and dominant football player. Jim will always be remembered as one of pro football's greatest individuals."

Brown was involved in several off-the-field incidents, especially shortly after he retired.

He was arrested a half-dozen times, mostly on charges of hitting women. He was once fined and spent a day in jail after beating up a golfing partner. He was charged with rape, sexual battery and assault in 1985 (the charges were later dropped). The next year he was arrested for allegedly beating his fiancée. In 1999, Brown was acquitted of domestic threats against his wife but convicted of

smashing the window of her car and spent time in jail when he refused to attend domestic violence counseling.

*The Associated Press contributed to this story.*