

Bob McNamara, a former All-American athlete at Minnesota, benefactor, fundraiser and friend to all who wore the Maroon and Gold, passed away on Sunday night. He was 82.

McNamara, who grew up in Hastings, Minn., lettered in football for the Gophers from 1951-54. He also played two seasons for the Minnesota basketball team, earning a letter in 1953. McNamara was inducted into the M Club Hall of Fame in 1993.

McNamara was a First Team All-American halfback in 1954, which was the same year he was named Team MVP. He was also honored as First Team All-Big Ten in 1952 and 1954, and helped lead Minnesota to a 7-2 record during his senior season. After his playing days at Minnesota were complete, he became an All-Star running back with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers in the Canadian Football League and later played two seasons with the Denver Broncos in the AFL.

McNamara's impact on the playing field may only be trumped by what he did for the university after his collegiate and professional career were done. McNamara and his wife, Annette, were instrumental in the building of TCF Bank Stadium and he was asked to serve as one of the honorary captains for the inaugural game against Air Force on Sept. 12, 2009.

McNamara also played significant roles in the construction of Baseline Tennis Center, Siebert Field and various other facilities on campus. He was also a prominent voice in the 2001 Save Gopher Sports Campaign, which helped keep men's gymnastics, men's golf and women's golf varsity sports at Minnesota.

McNamara was a season-ticket holder for Gopher football for nearly 60 years, had men's basketball tickets for more than 40 and men's hockey for more than 20. He also supported five endowed scholarships at Minnesota.

McNamara's brother, Richard "Pinky" McNamara, played with him at Minnesota on the football field, earning letters from 1954-56. Pinky, who passed away in 2011, was also a staunch supporter of his alma mater and the McNamara Alumni Center is named in his honor.

The McNamara Academic Center, which is in the Bierman Field Athletic Building and is used daily by Minnesota's more-than 750 student-athletes, is named after both Bob and Pinky. The brothers also received the 2010 Distinguished Minnesotan Award from the Minnesota chapter of the National Football Foundation for their contributions to Minnesota football. The football stadium at Hastings High School, McNamara Stadium, is also named in honor of the brothers.

Bob McNamara was one of six brothers. He is survived by his wife, Annette, daughters Anne Marie and Suzy and son, Bobby.

What they are saying about Bob McNamara

Norwood Teague. Minnesota Athletic Director

"The University of Minnesota had no greater advocate than Bob McNamara. From the first day I met Bob, it was easy to tell that he was a special Gopher. He loved Minnesota and everything it stood for and was a tireless promoter and fundraiser for the university. From athletics to academics, his fingerprints are all over this campus, as he literally had an impact in everything that we do. There will never be another Bob McNamara and we thank him and his family for everything they have done for Minnesota."

Joel Maturi, Minnesota Athletic Director from 2002-2012

"It is hard for me to put into words what Bob meant to me personally, but more importantly what he meant to Gopher athletics. Anyone who knew Bob, knew that there was no greater supporter of the university. He took great pride coming from Hastings, Minn., and playing for the Gophers and

then took even greater pride in following and supporting the Gophers. Nobody was better at fundraising or cared more about Minnesota than Bob. He will be deeply missed.”

Jerry Kill, Minnesota Head Football Coach

“Bob McNamara was just a special person and a wonderful alumni and friend to Gopher football. He did so much for our program throughout the years and never asked for anything in return. The only thing he ever wanted to know was how he could help more. His was a great man and one that I, and our program, will never forget. My thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Annette and their family during this difficult time.”

Geoff Young, Minnesota Men’s Tennis Head Coach

“Gopher tennis has lost a great friend in Bob McNamara. He was a tremendous supporter of the tennis programs and took a lead position in helping get the Baseline Tennis Center built. He became a personal friend of mine and was somebody who always had a smile on his face and was willing to help whenever help was needed. He will be greatly missed.”