

= Kenny Easley =

Kenneth Mason Easley , Jr . (born January 15 , 1959) is a former American college and professional football player who was a strong safety in the National Football League (NFL) for seven seasons during the 1980s . He played college football for the University of California , Los Angeles , and was a three @-@ time consensus All @-@ American . A first @-@ round pick in the 1981 NFL Draft , Easley played professionally for the NFL 's Seattle Seahawks from 1981 to 1987 . He is considered one of the greatest Seahawks players of all @-@ time and one of the greatest safeties in NFL history .

In 1984 , Easley was named the NFL Defensive Player of the Year by the Associated Press . He was a four @-@ time All ? Pro selection and was elected to the Pro Bowl five times in his career . Easley 's career ended after the 1987 season , when he was diagnosed with severe kidney disease .

After retirement , Easley owned a Cadillac dealership , and later , the Norfolk Nighthawks AF2 team from 1999 ? 2003 . In 1998 , he was inducted into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame .

= = Early years = =

Easley was born in Chesapeake , Virginia . Easley graduated from Oscar F. Smith High School in Chesapeake , VA where he became the first player in the history of Virginian high school football to rush and pass for over 1 @,@ 000 yards in a single season . As a result , he was named as an All @-@ State and All @-@ American selection at quarterback . On September 6 , 1996 , Oscar F. Smith High School honored Easley and two other football graduates Ed Beard and Steve DeLong by naming its football stadium " Beard ? DeLong ? Easley Field " .

= = College career = =

Allegedly recruited by 350 colleges , Easley selected UCLA for his college football career . He started 10 games his freshman year , recording nine interceptions and was named to his first all Pac @-@ 10 squad . His 93 tackles established a school @-@ record for tackles by a true freshman . Later , he became the first player in conference history to be honored as all @-@ conference for four consecutive years . Playing from 1977 to 1980 , Easley finished his college career with a school @-@ record nineteen interceptions and 324 tackles . Easley was selected as a three @-@ time consensus All @-@ American selection ? (1978 , 1979 , and 1980) and finished ninth in the Heisman Trophy balloting in 1980 . His jersey number was retired by the school , and in 1991 he was elected to the UCLA Athletic Hall of Fame and the College Football Hall of Fame . He also played basketball at the junior varsity level for UCLA and was drafted by the Chicago Bulls in the tenth round of the 1981 NBA Draft but did not play .

= = Professional career = =

Easley was selected as the fourth overall pick in the first round of the 1981 NFL Draft by the Seattle Seahawks . He became an immediate starter as a rookie , recording three interceptions for 155 yards and one touchdown , earning him AFC Defensive Rookie of the Year honors . In 1983 , the Seahawks hired former Buffalo Bills coach Chuck Knox as their head coach and Easley immediately became the " backbone " of Knox 's defense . In his first season playing for Knox , Easley won the AFC Defensive Player of the Year Award and recorded seven interceptions . In 1984 , Easley led the NFL in interceptions with ten , which tied a club record . He returned two of them for touchdowns and was named as the NFL Defensive Player of the Year , the first safety awarded since Dick Anderson in 1973 . On November 4 , 1984 , during a 45 ? 0 win against the Kansas City Chiefs , the Seahawks returned four interceptions for touchdowns , including one caught by Easley , breaking the record for most touchdowns scored from an interception in a game . He also took over the role of the team 's main punt returner when Paul Johns got injured earlier in the season .

After the season , Easley signed a five @-@ year contract to stay with the Seahawks , averaging \$ 650 @,@ 000 a year plus incentives . The contract made him one of the highest paid defensive players in the league . In 1985 , Easley was selected for his fourth consecutive Pro Bowl , a team record until defensive tackle Cortez Kennedy was selected for his fifth consecutive Pro Bowl in 1995 .

Easley was injured for most of the 1986 season . He injured his knee against the San Diego Chargers on October 11 , and the next month , missed the remainder of the season due to ankle surgery . In December , Easley was rumored to be in the trading block as the Seahawks was attempting to get the first overall pick in the 1987 NFL Draft from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers , in order to draft quarterback Vinny Testaverde .

In 1987 , Easley was the Seahawks player representative , and a leading figure in the 1987 NFL strike . Seeking a new collective bargaining agreement with free agency a major factor , the head of the National Football League Players Association Gene Upshaw managed to convince Easley and hundreds of his fellow NFL players to go on strike . As a response , the league decided to use replacement players to fill up their rosters , along with a few veterans that crossed the " picket line " . When former teammate Jim Zorn offered his services to the Seahawks , Easley said

He obviously is either desperate to play in the NFL or desperate for money . Here 's a guy who played in the NFL for a long time and who was adored and was admired by his fans and teammates . Now , he turns his back on us .

Easley also warned his fellow players that he was against the idea of using violence against the replacement players in order to prove a point . Once the strike ended , Easley had an off @-@ year as the Seahawks passing defense fell to 25th in the league . His last game was a 23 ? 20 loss against the Houston Oilers during the 1987 NFL playoffs in overtime .

= = = Trade and retirement = = =

Prior to the 1988 season , the Seahawks offered Easley to several clubs in an attempt to get a quarterback in return . Easley 's declining play , which was partially blamed on his work during the strike , and the blossoming of Easley 's backup Paul Moyer , had made Easley expendable . On April 22 , 1988 , the Seahawks traded Easley to the Phoenix Cardinals for quarterback Kelly Stouffer . During the mandatory team physical , Easley was diagnosed with idiopathic nephrotic syndrome , a severe kidney disease that voided the trade . Easley had told Moyer that he thought his days with the Seahawks were numbered because of his involvement in the player 's strike . He was not surprised when the trade happened , but the kidney diagnosis had " shocked " him . The Seahawks offered several draft picks as compensation to the Cardinals to complete the trade , and Easley announced his retirement a few months later .

Easley filed a lawsuit against the Seahawks , their team trainer , and the team doctors stating that an overdose of Advil (ibuprofen) for an ankle injury a few years before was the cause of his kidney failure . He knew as early as 1986 that there were issues with his kidney , but finally realized the severity of it when he failed the Cardinals physical . Easley claimed that he took 15 to 20 Advil 's daily for three months to reduce the swelling in his ankle , before a doctor interfered and told him to stop . A former teammate said that Advil and other medications were easily obtainable in the Seahawks locker room in " large dispensers " without proper medical supervision . Easley 's physicians claimed that they never told him to take the quantity of Advil 's Easley claimed he took . His case made national headlines and formed discussion involving the safe use of over the counter medication like Advil . The lawsuit was later settled out of court .

Easley received a new kidney two years later at the University of Washington Medical Center . After his retirement Easley cut most of his ties with the Seahawks organization , citing the lawsuit , how his " dignity " was affected by the Stouffer trade , and how no one from the organization offered condolences after his transplant .

= = After retirement = =

In 1991 , Easley bought into a car dealership (along with partner Rick Johnson) , Alderwood Oldsmobile & Cadillac in Lynnwood Washington , (which later moved to Shoreline , Washington in 1996 , taking advantage of a General Motors program that made it easier for African @-@ Americans and other minorities to own an auto dealership . The dealership became successful and Easley was named president of the African American Dealers Association .

In 1999 , Easley , along with Buffalo Bills defensive end Bruce Smith , were named as the new owners of the Norfolk Nighthawks of the AF2 , a semi @-@ professional arena football league branched out from the Arena Football League . The day after the city announced Easley and Smith as owners , a controversy arose with Mark Garcea and Page Johnson , the owners of the Hampton Roads Admirals minor league hockey team , and the city of Norfolk , Virginia . Garcea and Johnson stated that they participated in the original AF2 meetings and asked the city for exclusive rights to own the franchise , providing a \$ 5 @,@ 000 down payment . Instead , the city allowed Easley and Smith to pay the league 's \$ 75 @,@ 000 franchise fee . The AF2 started playing their first games in the summer of 2000 . In his first season as owner , the Nighthawks averaged 6 @,@ 500 fans at their home field per game , and sold 3 @,@ 200 season tickets . The team made the AF2 playoffs , but lost money in their first season , which Easley blamed as " rookie mistakes " and startup costs . The team disbanded prior to the 2004 season .

Easley was named an honorary captain during Super Bowl XLIX .

= = Legacy = =

In his seven @-@ year career , Easley recorded 32 interceptions for 538 yards and three touchdowns , while also returning 27 punts for 302 yards . In 2002 , Easley was elected to the Seattle Seahawks Ring of Honor after several attempts by the Seahawks to nominate him , but he was not interested . He was also named to the NFL 1980s All @-@ Decade Team .