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## KENN'S DAUGHTER LEADS CAMPAIGN FOR HOF BID

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Falcons Ring of Honor member and former offensive lineman Mike Kenn made the list of top 26 semifinalists for the 2015 Pro Football Hall of Fame with the help of his daughter, Lisa Kenn.



Pure jumping-for-joy excitement; you know, the kind that makes your heart feel like it's going to beat right out of your chest.

For Lisa Kenn, the oldest daughter of former Atlanta Falcons offensive lineman Mike Kenn, it was that kind of joy that made her do a happy dance while sitting in Atlanta's evening rush hour traffic a week and a half ago.

Lisa Kenn had just ended a phone call with former Atlanta Journal Constitution and Falcons beat writer Len Pasquarelli, who delivered the incredible news that her dad had made the top 26 semifinalists for the 2015 Pro Football Hall of Fame induction class. All the campaigning Lisa Kenn started in the summertime for her dad was finally starting to come to fruition.

"I thought my heart was going to explode with happiness," Lisa Kenn said.

A member of the Falcons Ring of Honor class of 2008, Mike Kenn has been retired from the game of football for 20 years and eligible for football's highest recognition for the last 15. Over the years, Lisa Kenn and her younger sister, Kristy, heard

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friends, family members and even strangers tell their dad that he'd get into the Hall of Fame one day; he deserved to.

The wheels started turning after fellow Falcons Ring of Honor member and former defensive lineman Claude Humphrey was bestowed with the highest honor 33 years after retiring from the NFL. This event added fuel to their mounting fire. As a family they thought, why not?

And so the campaigning for the 2015 HOF induction began, including a Twitter name (@MikeKennHOF2015) to help get the message out to the public.

Immediately, Mike Kenn's oldest daughter took the reins, starting off by contacting the right people. With help from her younger sister and her mom, Joanie, it was off to the races.

"It's a recognition of how much they love their dad, that they're willing to put forth this time and effort," Mike Kenn said.

Receiving letters of endorsement from former players and coaches was the first step in the ongoing process, a task that intimidated Lisa Kenn. Coming from an old-school family, she, along with everyone else, doesn't enjoy seeking recognition, especially her five-time Pro Bowler dad.

"That was a really hard thing for me to do because I don't like asking people for help," Lisa Kenn said. "This whole calling, not just people, but guys – some of them are hall-of-famers, big-deal guys – and asking them to help not just me, but my dad, was kind of a nerve-racking experience."

Lisa Kenn encountered those who wouldn't return her call, and others who brushed off the request. The thought of her dad joining the modern era greats who have come before him kept moving her forward.

As the campaigning continued, the Kenns got to relive some of the three-time First-Team All-Pro's great memories from high school, college, and his career, including being selected 13<sup>th</sup> overall in the first round of the 1978 NFL Draft. Holding the Falcons' franchise record for games played and games started at 251, he continued excelling throughout his 17 year career, including 11 recovered fumbles.

Engrained to work hard from an early age, Mike Kenn did just that. It helped that he had natural talent, but because he wasn't built to be an offensive lineman he had to train harder than other guys in his position.

The challenge of the game alone kept him playing, but it also made him take a step back and look at it one game at a time over the years.

"I knew one, you were one injury away from your career being over," Mike Kenn said. "And two, you were one person away from somebody being better than you."

Both Mike Kenn and his daughter have accepted the reality of the circumstance and understand that the situation is out of their control. Approaching it this way allows them to keep their emotions in check throughout the process.

They aren't shy, however, about thinking of what that day will feel like if and when it comes.

"I'll feel a complete sense of satisfaction," Mike Kenn said. "Meaning that all the work, all the hard work, all the effort I put forward, all the pain and anguish which (players) go through, which includes the winning and the losing, I will feel very satisfied that it was a job well-done."

For Lisa Kenn, it would be a moment of pure joy and happiness much greater than what she felt when she found out Mike Kenn made it onto the list of semifinalists. With tears in her eyes, it was clear how much it would mean not only to her, but to the rest of her family, including No. 78.

With the list of 26 whittling down to 15 in early January, Lisa Kenn continues reaching out to her dad's former teammates for letters. She is rounding up statistics to send to the selectors to help draw a comparison between her dad and those like him who are already members of the HOF.

If Mike Kenn makes it through the next wave, the final voting will take place Jan. 31, 2015. If his name isn't announced as one of the 2015 inductees, Lisa Kenn and her army of family and friends plan to continue the campaign.

"The more you whisper about something, the louder it gets," Lisa Kenn said. "That's the goal."



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