

TEAM JACK SCORES

NFL's Rex Burkhead Wants to Help Find a Cure for Pediatric Brain Cancer

By Deb Silverthorn

The Team Jack Foundation scored a touchdown at Plano's Clark Field and Plano Sports Authority (PSA) II when more than 350 children and adults participated in the Second Annual Team Jack Trifecta chaired by New England Patriots running back Rex Burkhead. The day-long festivities of sports and auction raised nearly \$70,000, bringing the total raised by Team Jack for pediatric brain cancer research to more than \$5 million.

Rex Burkhead, the former Cincinnati Bengal and current New England Patriot, returned to his former home field at Clark Field for the day's events. Rex, who graduated from Plano Senior High School in 2009, says his hero is Jack Hoffman, a 12-year-old boy fighting pediatric brain cancer. After a magical meeting in 2013, they have been connected by their hearts, families and a mission.

While recovering from a brain tumor surgery, Jack requested lunch and a tour of the Nebraska Cornhuskers facilities. When Rex offered to take the Hoffman family around, he couldn't have known the impact that family would have on him, or he on them and every other child ever destined to fight his same battle.

"Jack, and all the kids like him, deserve our all," said Rex, who as a child played for the Plano Football League and Plano Sports Au-

thority leagues. The Team Jack events were chaired by Rex, his wife Danielle, his parents Robyn and Rick and his brother Ryan. "I look around, and I couldn't be prouder of the people in the town I love, helping the young man I've come to love. This is something."

"It's incredible that people from all over the country are participating year-round in backing me up, in backing Jack and kids like him up as we look for hope and a cure," said Rex. He's proud to be a part of the fight against childhood cancer and was alarmed when he heard the statistics that each day nine children are diagnosed with a brain tumor, that 30 percent won't survive, and that only four percent of all U.S. federal cancer funding is dedicated to childhood cancer research. "This is a team effort in a game we have to win."

Jack's parents, Brianna and Andrew Hoffman, Jack and his sisters Ava and Reese are thankful for Rex's support. "We're raising money and awareness, and Rex has been a team captain and leader constantly giving us hope and helping in the push all the way. He's become a friend—really like family—like we never could have known," said Andrew.

"Rex has rallied the prayer warriors, he's rallied donors, and he's rallied the cause making it his passion. His passion is contagious and

we're here in awe," he said. "Plano's a special place of family and concern and we're humbled. When you're battling a disease with as little backing as pediatric brain cancer, you can move mountains with the kind of help that Plano's \$100,000-plus means."

Team Jack's Trifecta is just one of the organization's many efforts. The 2018 calendar is filled with a gala, a road race, color out 5K, a radiothon and directed donations. Year round the non-profit team, with just one staffer, works to provide for clinical trials for children, to bring new therapies to the United States, and to develop a pediatric brain tumor program at UNMC's Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center to serve pediatric patients now traveling far to fulfill hope of treatment. "We've taken no less than 30 trips to Boston, and, while we're grateful for the talent and expertise, it would be something for our children and their families to find services closer to home," said Andrew. "The economics of medical crisis are overwhelming and building for our children to have a future is where we're at."

Jack's disease, surgeries, chemo treatments, numerous MRIs and 14 pills each day won't keep him down. He may have permanently disabling effects from his cancer, but his spirit and his fight for treatments and a cure are also permanent. "We may not be out of the woods yet, but we're going to make the most out of the time we're in the woods," said Andrew. "There's no time to be anything but thankful for the moment we're in."

For Rex Burkhead, a Plano hometown hero, dedicated and determined to make a difference is just the way he is. "This is about a little boy who had a dream," said Rex, for whom Plano remains home in the off-season. "And I don't know any different than to take that moment when we met and make it last his whole life—and to have his life last a whole lot longer."

For more information or to make a donation to Team Jack, visit TeamJackFoundation.org or call 855.786.5225.



Ameen Behbahani (foreground - Plano West/University of Houston alum) and Rex's brother, Ryan Burkhead (top left - Plano Senior/Harvard University graduate) coached a crew of Team Jack Trifecta participants through a skills session. More than 350 kids and adults helped raise close to \$70,000 at the March 24 Team Jack Trifecta, monies to support pediatric brain cancer research. Photo credit: Lisa Rothberg



NFL player Rex Burkhead and Team Jack namesake Jack Hoffman have had much to celebrate in these years together, including Jack winning a "Best Moment" ESPY award when he entered Nebraska's 2013 spring game and scored a 69-yard touchdown. The two were invited to the White House to meet President Barack Obama in 2013.

Photo courtesy: Team Jack Foundation



Jackson Jeffcoat (left - Plano West/UT Graduate) and Cedric Ogbuehi (Allen High School, Texas A&M) were among many former North Texas high school alum who have made a name for themselves on the pro fields, returning home to support Team Jack. Photo credit: Lisa Rothberg



Jack Hoffman, left, with his parents Andrew and Brianna, and sisters Reese (front) and Ava, celebrating a New England Patriots game - and their favorite Patriot - Rex Burkhead. Jack, is the namesake and inspiration behind the Team Jack Foundation which has raised over \$5 million for pediatric brain cancer research and patient support. Photo courtesy of the Hoffman Family



Robyn Burkhead, (center), surrounded by Team Jack participants who with husband Rick (not pictured) has supported her son Rex's football passion since he was a child, continues to do so whether it's cheering on her favorite New England Patriot or co-chairing the Team Jack Trifecta. Photo credit: Lisa Rothberg