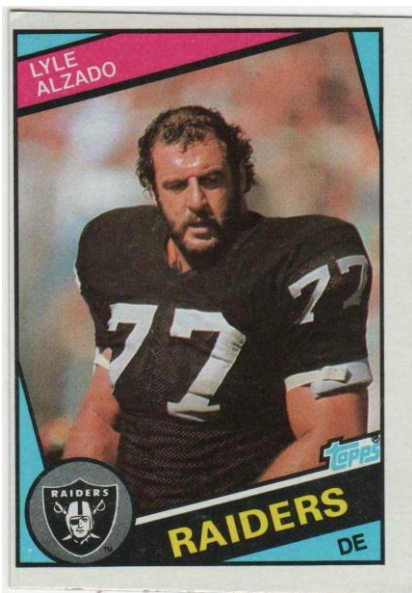




## LYLE ALZADO

This article was written by Rich Shmelter

Lyle Alzado's path to NFL stardom began in Brooklyn, New York, and ended in Los Angeles with the Raiders. From Lawrence High School, where he not only stood out in football but track, he attended Kilgore Junior College for two years before going to Yankton College in South Dakota. Lyle was also a standout boxer, as his Golden Gloves championship will attest. He was also a street Fighter and claimed to have been stabbed several times as a teenager.<sup>1</sup>



Yankton College was never looked at as a professional football breeding ground, but Alzado stood out with his aggressive play. A scout from the Denver Broncos happened to notice his dominating play while viewing game film and immediately decided that Alzado had the ability to perform at the next level. He had everything a team looked for in a defender. He was strong, tough, intense, very intimidating, and never let up on those attributes throughout his entire career. On draft day in 1971, the Broncos took their scout's advice and selected Alzado in the fourth round, making him the only player from Yankton College to ever play in the NFL.<sup>2</sup>

Alzado proved the scout right by becoming one of the most furious pass rushers and run defenders in pro football throughout the 1970's and into the 80's, earning the 1977 NFL Defensive Player of the Year Award, as well as the AFC Player of the Year, All-Pro first



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team, and a trip to the Pro Bowl. The following season he earned second team All-Pro honors, first team All-AFC, and another trip to the Pro Bowl.

In 1979, Alzado got into a contract dispute with Denver, and instead of dealing with the situation, the Broncos traded him to the Cleveland Browns. A change of uniform did not slow Alzado down, and he once again became the driving force for the Browns. In his first year with the Browns, Alzado earned second team All-AFC honors, and in his second season, the Browns won the AFC Central Division title with Alzado leading the way on defense, and he once again earned first team All-AFC and first team All-Pro honors. Alzado's stay in Cleveland ended on bitter terms when the Browns felt he was on the downside of his career following the 1981 season. It was also claimed that personal problems were a factor in Cleveland's decision to part ways with him.<sup>3</sup>

Al Davis always liked Alzado's all-out play, and when he had the opportunity to make the fierce competitor a Raider, he jumped at the chance. For virtually nothing, the Browns traded Alzado to the Raiders in 1982. Out to prove that he was not washed up, Alzado played for the Raiders with reckless abandon.<sup>4</sup> His play was so impressive that he was selected the 1982 NFL Comeback Player of the Year Award and once again found himself on the All-AFC first team for the fourth time. He continued to perform at a high level during the Raiders 1983 championship season, and throughout the following campaign. In 1985 an injury forced him to the sidelines after 11 games, and he retired following that season. In 1990, at the age of 41, Alzado attempted a comeback with the Raiders. However, a knee injury during training camp led to his release. If it were not for that injury, there is no telling what might have happened.

Two years later, Lyle Alzado succumbed to a brain tumor, which many felt was a direct result of his obsessive use of anabolic steroids and human growth hormones, and passed away at 43 years of age. While he was so ill with cancer, Alzado made a plea to everyone who even thought about steroid use to never do it. Throughout his career, Alzado gave much of himself to helping children battling illness, and even as death was closing in on him, he still cared enough to make an example of himself so that he might be able to save others from making the same mistakes he did when it came to using performance enhancing drugs.