



## Graham Charles Tutt

August 27, 1956 - June 22, 2022

It is with deep sadness that the death has been confirmed of former professional soccer player and coach, Graham 'Buster' Charles Tutt. Graham died on 22 June 2022, in Marietta, Georgia, surrounded by his loving family, following a long battle after heart surgery. He was 65 years old. He is preceded in death by his father, Reginald James Tutt, and his mother, Joyce Maud Nancy Hilda Jenkins Tutt. He is survived by his wife, Liz Potts Tutt, as well as his two sons; Billy Tutt and fiancé Jennifer Rhodes, Taylor Tutt and wife Megan Cencula-Tutt; his brother Jim Tutt and wife Eileen Tutt, his sister Julie Tutt Tucker and husband Kevin Tucker; his pugs Bella and Gracie; as well as countless nieces and nephews, neighbors and friends around the world.

Graham was a much-loved man who faced life's challenges with fortitude and bravery and won worldwide respect for his battling spirit and infectious enthusiasm and warmth. He was the epitome of the statement 'glass-half-full' – a man who saw positive in everything. It seemed nothing could bring him down.

Graham was born in London on 27 August 1956. From humble beginnings, he discovered his love of soccer on disused wasteland near the council estate where he was raised and the boggy playing fields of southeast London and was quickly spotted as a goalkeeper of outstanding promise. He made his name as a professional soccer player, playing in goal for Charlton Athletic FC in London, England before an eye injury sustained in front of millions of people on television stalled his meteoric rise. He had been tipped for international honors.

He was signed by Charlton Athletic in the summer of 1973, and was mentored by Charlton manager, Theo Foley, who took the six-foot-four 17-year-old under his wing. Graham adored Foley who encouraged him at every turn and handed him his first team debut in March 1974.

Over the course of the next two years, Graham established himself in the Charlton first team and was attracting the interest of bigger clubs when a devastating injury at

Sunderland greatly affected his vision. Despite characteristically valiant attempts to regain his place, his career in the English game was over, which was a devastating blow. Despite suggestions that the injury that finished his career could have been avoided if the other player involved had been less reckless, Graham was never bitter, even though the incident came perilously close to ending his life or blinding him.

In 1977, Graham moved to South Africa, where his brother Jim lived. He decided to stay and, despite still being prone to double vision caused by the injury, began re-building his career at Pretoria-based Arcadia Shepherds. He played in the country's first multi-racial league and witnessed, at first hand, some of the worst excesses of apartheid. Graham was part of one of the first predominantly white sides to play in Soweto, which was a source of great pride to him.

While there he was coached by Trevor Gething and developed a technique for overcoming his double vision and eventually, showing typical determination, regained something approaching the form he had demonstrated as a professional in England.

In the late 1970s, Graham settled in America, joining American Soccer League Team, Columbus Magic in Ohio, where he first became interested in coaching and community work.

In October 1980, Graham joined Atlanta Chiefs in Georgia. It was a move that would change his life and where he would settle after meeting the love of his life and starting a family.

After his playing career finished, he began running a summer soccer school at Kennesaw College which led to a network of soccer clinics at various elementary and middle schools in the area. Young people gravitated to him and he had a positive influence on thousands of children and teenagers who attended his clinics as his reputation grew.

His entrepreneurial spirit and unquenching desire for hard work led to him establishing a 26-acre indoor soccer facility as well as the Atlanta Attack team, a professional indoor soccer league while he continued to develop his summer soccer camps.

It was through this that he met soccer coach Liz Potts, the woman he loved from the moment he met her until his dying day. Ever the romantic, he proposed to her in a hot air balloon over the foothills of the North Georgia Mountains and, after their wedding, they lived for a while in a remote cabin located in the Appalachian mountains.

In the early 1990s, Graham began working as a head coach at Life University, a leading chiropractic college in Marietta, the town he, Liz, and the boys would eventually call home in the family house of their dreams.

After the college lost its accreditation in the early 2000s, Graham returned to his dream of establishing a national indoor soccer league under the umbrella name of ACTION, after partnering with Jerry Wilson, a dear friend, whose premature death stalled the project which had been gathering pace and potential investors.

In 2012, Graham was inducted into the Georgia Soccer Hall of Fame in recognition of his contribution to the sport at both grassroots and professional level, working with people of all ages and especially encouraging women and girls to get involved. At the ceremony, it was remarked how Graham had covered every aspect of the game in Atlanta between 1980 and 2012.

In 2011, Graham was approached by British journalist and author Matt Eastley, a lifelong Charlton fan to write an article about his life. A great friendship developed and in 2021, Graham's autobiography, the aptly-titled *Never Give Up*, was published.

Graham never stopped looking forward, bringing people along with him with an almost incessant stream of ideas and plans while telling anyone who would listen how fortunate he was to have his beloved Liz at his side. Rarely can a man have loved a woman more. Ever the perfect team, he coached alongside Liz at Pace Academy for 20+ years.

With typical enthusiasm, Graham threw himself into attracting documentary makers and film producers with his story and was planning a busy marketing campaign before he was taken in for the surgery. He fought for four weeks following the surgery, but could not survive without life support.

His death robs the world of a truly great man who constantly fought and overcame great adversity, rising from the gritty streets of south London to a professional football career, cruelly cut short. Yet he was never bitter or negative, always had a smile on his face, retained a great sense of humour, had an almost boyish zest for life, and always saw the best in people. He had that remarkable ability to leave an impression on everyone he met. It was difficult not to smile or feel happy in his presence, such was his kind, generous nature. He was one of life's givers.

Despite everything, it was his family which meant most to him. After losing his parents in the early 2000s, he attributed his amazing resilience and fortitude to them. Though the

terrible injury he suffered in 1976 occasionally played on his mind, shortly before the publication of his book, he finally found closure when he made contact with the other player involved and, in his typical way, offered total forgiveness and found the strength to see that injury sustained at far off Sunderland as a positive turning point. Each setback ultimately led him to the life he so passionately lived with his family– his greatest pride, whom he adored and loved fiercely.

The memorial service will be held 4:00 PM Saturday, July 30th at Mayes Ward-Dobbins Funeral Home, 180 Church Street, Marietta, GA. Visitation will be 3-4:00 PM prior to the service.

The family request that in lieu of flowers contributions may be made to Soccer in the Streets at <https://www.soccerstreets.org/> or Soccer in the Streets, 130 Boulevard NE, Suite 1, Atlanta, GA 30312.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUL **30**. 3:00 PM - 3:55 PM (EDST)

Mayes Ward-Dobbins Funeral Home  
180 Church Street, N.E.  
Marietta, GA 30060

## Memorial Service

JUL **30**. 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (EDST)

Mayes Ward-Dobbins Funeral Home  
180 Church Street, N.E.  
Marietta, GA 30060

# Tribute Wall



“ *Mayes Ward-Dobbins Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of Graham Charles Tutt*



Mayes Ward-Dobbins Funeral Home - July 30 at 03:05 PM

SB

*Thanks for the Biblical references which encourages me and gives me hope of that Eternal Love and hope for the future with Our Father in Heaven. Amen. Wonderful and beautifully done and thanks that I could attend with all of you. Lots of Love from Vienna, Austria.*

Spoedie Bronkhorst - July 30 at 05:29 PM

LD

“ *Graham. Well me ole china plate I have lating memories of you, and now a life companion Book to read and read, Thank you for the great displays you put on in goal at Charlton. My codolences to your loving wife and family. Keep saving those shots in heaven, I am sure God has already picked you for his keeper. Thank you for the advice you gave me as like you I was a trialist too.*

Lee (Geeza) Davis - August 02 at 12:06 AM

JO

“ *Joannepalozzi lit a candle in memory of Graham Charles Tutt*



joannepalozzi - July 31 at 01:15 PM

JD

“ Joe And Janet Dray lit a candle in memory of Graham Charles Tutt



Joe and Janet Dray - July 30 at 03:46 PM

ME

“ Matt Eastley lit a candle in memory of Graham Charles Tutt



Matt Eastley - July 30 at 03:37 PM

KE

“ Kelly lit a candle in memory of Graham Charles Tutt



Kelly - July 30 at 03:31 PM

ME

“ I'm still in a state of suspended disbelief really that Buster is no longer here. His was a friendship which came later in life for me and one which I never expected to be so strong. It was a privilege to collaborate with Graham on his autobiography and to help him realise a dream. I was slightly in awe of him as a former hero of mine but I discovered an extraordinarily generous and positive man, utterly without ego who only appeared to see the best in everything. I miss him very much and am sending my best wishes across the pond from England to the States and will be following the service today with a tear in my eye.

Matt Eastley - July 30 at 03:21 PM

DC

“ Diana Chapman lit a candle in memory of Graham Charles Tutt



Diana Chapman - July 30 at 03:06 PM

SB

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



Spoedie Bronkhorst - July 30 at 01:50 PM

SB

*Played with Graham and Ian Gillies in South Africa 1977. I miss both of them and I am grateful to have know them. Your friend Spoedie*

Spoedie Bronkhorst - July 30 at 01:53 PM

SB

*Thank you for making it possible to be on live streaming and partake in the service. Love and greetings to Liz and the Boys. God the Almighty will reunite all His children one day in Heaven.*

Spoedie Bronkhorst - July 30 at 01:58 PM

ME

*Spoedie - we never met but Graham told me great things about you when I worked with him on his autobiography. He really loved playing with you.*

Matt Eastley - July 30 at 03:24 PM

SH

“ Suzanne Hill lit a candle in memory of Graham Charles Tutt



suzanne Hill - July 29 at 08:40 PM

MB

“ Will miss my uncle so much. You have always been my hero and have lots of wonderful memories. Lots of love being sent out to Liz and the boys. Hope you are bearing up OK.

Marky xxx



Mark Barker - July 29 at 02:46 PM

JB

Uncle Graham (Buster) was always fun to be around. He was always great company, entertaining, made people laugh and was an eternal optimist. My thoughts are with Liz and the boys during this time. John xxx

John Barker - July 30 at 04:46 AM



“ Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Graham Charles Tutt.



July 29 at 02:36 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Graham Charles Tutt.



July 26 at 04:51 PM



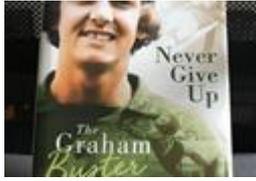
“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Graham Charles Tutt.



July 25 at 12:53 PM

LT

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Liz Tutt - July 20 at 04:40 PM

NL

“ 13 files added to the tribute wall



Nancy Luce - July 20 at 04:38 PM

PF

“ Patsie Potts & Family purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Graham Charles Tutt.



Patsie Potts & Family - July 19 at 05:23 PM