

# Exhibit 2

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# Chris Nowinski Statement on Professional Wrestling

I am releasing a statement regarding the Concussion Legacy Foundation's outreach and recruiting efforts within the professional wrestling community. This is in advance of a reporter writing an article attempting to create controversy where there is none. This statement makes clear that we remain committed to improving health outcomes of professional wrestlers, and explains how we accomplish that within the broader scope of our mission.

Specifically, I have been informed that, in an upcoming article, a reporter is attempting to invent conflict by asserting that post-death brain donations among professional wrestlers have declined since CLF received an unrestricted gift from WWE in 2012 that has supported research aimed at accelerating a cure for CTE. These assertions ignore the facts; completely misunderstand the process and motivation behind CLF's brain donation recruiting and outreach; and disregard CLF's broad mission to advance research into CTE for all athletes and other at-risk groups, with a special focus on contact sports that millions of children play, as well as military veterans.

Scientific inquiry into CTE is complex. In the interest of providing the general public, as well as the professional wrestling community, with a better understanding of our brain donation initiatives and our broad research and education efforts, as well as to explain how these efforts benefit members of the professional wrestling community, I have prepared this summary. Be assured that the science remains independent, unrestricted and driven by our goals of advancing research toward detection during life as well as treatment and a cure for CTE, in addition to advancing public health.

## Concussion Legacy Foundation Mission

The Concussion Legacy Foundation believes we all have a responsibility to ensure that athletes can reach their full potential on and off the field. We are committed to protecting athletes and families through research, policy, and education. CLF is determined to usher in positive change on a national scale and to solve the concussion crisis. Researching the brains of hundreds of former athletes helps advance research focused on CTE treatment, and also raises awareness of the risks of brain trauma in sports.

## CTE History

By 2007, there were fewer than 50 cases confirmed in the medical literature worldwide, almost exclusively in boxers. In 2007 CLF (then called the Sports Legacy Institute) was founded. Some of our early work involved wrestlers, and in 2007 it was announced that professional wrestler Chris Benoit was diagnosed with CTE by a researcher then associated with CLF.

### **The ground-breaking work of the VA-BU-CLF brain bank**

In 2008, the scope of our mission expanded. CLF partnered with Boston University School of Medicine and the US Department of Veterans Affairs to create the VA-BU-CLF Brain Bank to continue and expand CTE research. CLF performs outreach, recruiting, and public education efforts on behalf of the brain bank consortium. More than 340 brains of athletes and military veterans have been donated and studied for CTE, and over 200 have tested positive for CTE. These 200 CTE cases identified using the brain bank represent nearly two-thirds of the world's known cases of CTE.

The continuing goal of CLF and the brain bank is to procure tissue samples and clinical information from deceased athletes to better understand the pathology, etiology, and epidemiology of trauma-related neurodegenerative disorders. The work of the brain bank is designed to establish environmental and genetic risk factors, as well as, eventually, a diagnostic test for CTE in living persons.

### **The process to procure brain donations has evolved over time. Brain donations used to be primarily procured after death, which was not efficient.**

At the beginning of our work, neither the option for brain donation, nor CTE were well known in the athlete community. We have worked to raise awareness of both our brain donation program as well as CTE. In the early years, most brains were procured through active recruiting, meaning that a member of our team called the family immediately after learning about a death. Active recruiting is a time consuming and inefficient way to procure brains for research.

### **In 2008 CLF launched a better, more efficient approach: A brain donation registry. The registry has been enormously successful.**

A brain donation registry, where donors sign up in advance, is more effective and yields higher quality research specimens as well as clinical data directly from the registry participants while they are alive. As a result, in 2008, our primary approach to securing donations evolved and we launched a brain donation registry. We have conducted a continuous public education campaign around the need for brain donors, and we provide information about donations on our website. Today, over 1,100 athletes—in many sports, including professional wrestling—have pledged their brain to our research, and many have shared their pledge with the media to raise awareness.

Professional wrestlers have been an important part of this effort. I would like to personally thank [WWE Hall of Famer Mick Foley](#), [WWE Hall of Famer Kevin Nash](#), [Lance Storm](#), and Rob Van Dam for publicly pledging to donate their brains to CLF for research. I would also like to thank the other professional wrestlers who have donated their brains to CLF for research but who have chosen not to publicize their decision.

This brain donation campaign has been incredibly successful, and our brain donation program has transitioned from active recruitment to a program where since 2013, 94% of brain donations to us are initiated by the family or medical professionals. In each of the past three years, CLF has seen a record number of donations. Since 2013, 12 brains have been procured through active recruiting, while 175

brain donations have been initiated by the family or medical professionals, including many through the registry.

For the last few years, we have met our target goal number of donated brains without active recruiting. That target is primarily based on funding and research staff capacity limitations. Active recruiting is now only used in rare circumstances where the case is of special interest to the research team, like ALS cases in athletes, or cases of special interest to public health or public education.

**The goal of CLF's work through the brain bank is to move toward a cure for CTE and to advance public health.**

The primary goals of our outreach and recruiting efforts are to advance research toward a cure for CTE and to promote public health. Professional wrestling remains a part of this much broader goal.

To support CLF's broad public health mission, which is particularly focused on youth sports, we try to secure brain donations from athletes in all sports. We focus broadly on many sports for several reasons:

1. More than 30 million children participate in youth sports; we focus our resources on contact sports that children play, such as football, ice hockey, soccer and rugby.
2. Some CTE cases have public education value. The sports media has provided award-winning coverage of CTE in football, ice hockey, and other sports, providing great public health benefit. Professional wrestling does not have a large dedicated media following, and many media outlets do not cover professional wrestling. Notably, my hometown newspaper, *The Boston Globe*, did not cover Chris Benoit's CTE diagnosis.

**The Foundation's work regarding professional wrestlers has not changed.**

I have been asked if our professional wrestling-related research has changed since the WWE began providing funding to support CLF's efforts in late 2012. The answer is no. We applaud WWE's support and there has been no effort to influence CLF's mission. In fact since 2013, I have provided eight concussion and CTE education programs for WWE wrestlers.

The facts show that we have not changed our research protocols, nor has WWE funding influenced our research activities in any way. Here are the facts:

1. The brain bank has a written brain donation criteria that states the background of donors eligible to donate. The criteria is primarily focused on sports or brain trauma exposure history. Professional wrestlers have always met the criteria.
2. Since our inception, we have never turned away the family of a professional wrestler who wanted to donate their brain.
3. Brain donation continues to be initiated by the families of many former wrestlers, including in 2016. Many of the donations to the brain bank remain private at the request of the family.
4. Although we have not successfully recruited the brain of a former professional wrestler, post-death, since 2009, we continue to reach out to families of professional wrestlers to raise awareness of our mission.
5. Since the beginning of our recruiting efforts we have only reached out to only a very small percentage of potential donors in any brain trauma exposure category.

To be clear, we continue to encourage former professional wrestlers to pledge their brains to the brain bank, and we will continue to actively recruit the brains of professional wrestlers, particularly when the research will benefit public health and public education for all athletes.

In the brain bank, professional wrestlers are the 4<sup>th</sup> largest category of athlete donors, behind football, boxing, and ice hockey, and ahead of soccer, rugby, baseball, and lacrosse. We are very interested in identifying CTE cases in the lesser represented sports, as from the lens of public education, identifying multiple CTE cases in a single sport has frequently led to swift rule changes to protect athletes, especially children, from risk.

## **Conclusion**

I want to emphasize that professional wrestling has been and will continue to be a part of our work. I would like to thank the professional wrestling community for their support since a concussion ended my career in 2003. You have been among my earliest and strongest supporters, and together we have changed the world.

Your continued support is allowing us to advance a cure for CTE. I applaud WWE for its unrestricted financial support that has accelerated that research effort. WWE has donated \$1.67 million to the Concussion Legacy Foundation since 2012, of which \$1 million in grants has been or will be provided to researchers at Boston University for projects focused on the understanding and treatment of CTE, which will benefit professional athletes in all sports, including professional wrestlers.

If you would like to get involved in the research, join our brain donation registry [here](#). Please contact me with any questions [nowinski@concussionfoundation.org](mailto:nowinski@concussionfoundation.org).

Chris Nowinski

Co-founder & President of the Concussion Legacy Foundation

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