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Vernon Davis keeps busy with business ventures, acting and charity in post-NFL life

By Adam Zielonka | May 12, 2020



Hours before Super Bowl LIV kicked off in February, Fox ran a comedy sketch centered on former NFL stars Rob Gronkowski, James Harrison and Vernon Davis living it up “Golden Girls”-style in retirement. The video also broke some news, as Davis turned to the camera and acknowledged for the first time, “That’s right, I’m retiring!”

The irony isn’t lost on Davis that Gronkowski has come out of retirement to play for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers next season in the short time since that sketch aired. “Yeah, it’s like we traded places, so it is interesting,” Davis said in a recent interview.

But there’s no trace of a possibility that Davis would follow Gronkowski back to the NFL. The District native and former Redskins and University of Maryland tight end has plenty else on his plate in his post-football life, from an acting career and production companies to a new venture in home health care.

Davis only played in four games in 2019 before a concussion took him out and ultimately landed him on injured reserve for the rest of the year. While he was sidelined, he started making plans for his latest idea, the Vernon Davis Home Care Group — and realized the timing felt right to go.

“Just having that time alone, away from the team, just going through the progression of being healthy again with the brain work that I was doing in the hospital and building that company,” Davis said, “all I could do is think and it just dawned on me that, hey, it’s time for the next chapter of my life. I need to walk away and try something else.”

For now, Davis is facing the pandemic like the rest of us — working from home in the District and spending time with his three children, a 12-year-old son, 8-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son.

And he's found a variety of ways to help people during the pandemic. In partnership with RASA, an Indian fast-casual restaurant in the District, his foundation has raised \$70,000 to feed both front-line health care workers and children who've gone without school meals. He's also recorded messages for sick children and even joined Chris Cooley in surprising a Redskins-loving couple who had to postpone their wedding with a live video chat.

His home health care group operates in Virginia and sends registered nurses to assess clients before providing a professional caregiver, but Davis added that in some cases, adult children or relatives of an elderly person in need of care can be compensated for becoming the caregiver.

"And right now that is critical because of what is going on" with the coronavirus, Davis said. "You're not taking the chance of having someone into your home or sending your relative out and then they're contracting this virus, right? You stay at home and you can still thrive and take care and be safe and know that everything's OK."

Davis, who majored in studio art at Maryland, is also keeping busy with art of another kind: acting and film production. After being featured in the 2019 Western "Hell on the Border" as a former slave, Davis' latest role will be the male lead in the upcoming film "Red Winter," a thriller filmed in Colorado in which he shot some scenes while on a snowmobile.

Davis has also founded not one but two production companies, Reel 85 and Between the Lines Productions. The latter is working on a horror film called "A Message From Brianna" about a man haunted by the spirit of a distant relative who obsessed over him and disappeared long ago.

"I'm not a big horror film watcher, I'm not one of those guys, but when it comes to actually creating the content and being involved in the project, I love the process," Davis said. "I love the capability to just go different places. When you're working, when you're acting in a horror film, you have to go so many places. You have to show fear, you have to show love, you have to be compassionate and show all kinds of stuff."

Football might not be the first thing on his mind these days, but Davis said he was excited about the Redskins' direction under new coach Ron Rivera.

"It's going to be good for the team, the culture that he's going to be able to create and the approach that he's going to use to get those guys to play," Davis said. "That's what good leaders do. They find a way to get the team to rally behind them. And he's shown he can do that. I think he's going to be good for (quarterback Dwayne) Haskins. Haskins is gonna have a great year."