

# Stars pay tribute to Swayze

Hollywood actor Patrick Swayze, best known for his roles in hit films *Dirty Dancing* and *Ghost*, has died after a long battle with pancreatic cancer, his publicist said. The 57-year-old heart-throb, whose other films included the surfing thriller *Point Break*, died after suffering complications from the illness, Swayze's publicist confirmed.

**“Patrick Swayze passed away peacefully on Monday with family at his side after facing the challenges of his illness for the last 20 months,”** a statement said.

Demi Moore, his co-star in *Ghost*, led the tributes to Swayze, using Twitter to share her message of grief.

**“Patrick you are loved by so many and your light will forever shine in all of our lives,”** she wrote.

**“And in the words of Sam to Molly. ‘It’s amazing Molly. The love inside, you take it with you.’ I love and will miss you Patrick.”**

California Governor and former Hollywood action hero Arnold Schwarzenegger describing him as a “talented and passionate artist who struck a memorable chord with audiences throughout the world”.

“He played a wide range of characters both on stage and in movies and his celebrated performances made the hard work of acting look effortless - which I know from experience is not easy,” Schwarzenegger said.

Swayze was diagnosed with advanced stage-four pancreatic cancer in January 2008, leaving him with only a one-per cent chance of surviving longer than five years, according to medical experts.

The actor had bravely fought the disease in the public eye, continuing to work on set despite gruelling cancer

treatment and significant weight loss.

In January he slammed tabloid reporting of his condition in an interview with ABC television's Barbara Walters, where he bullishly declared that he was determined to beat his condition.

He told Walters he had tried to keep his illness secret but went public to protect family and friends after tabloids reported he was close to



death.

“Hope is a very, very fragile thing in anyone's life and the people I love do not need to have that hope robbed from them when it's unjustified and it's untrue,” Swayze said.

Yet only a few months later,

Swayze's representative was forced to issue a condemnation of “reckless”.

A lanky Texan with a dancer's easy grace, Swayze - the son of a dance teacher and an engineering drafter - had a string of hit films in the 1980s and 1990s. He was named Sexiest Man Alive by *People* magazine in 1991.

As a young man, he moved to New York city in 1972 for more formal dance training at the prestigious Harkness Ballet and Joffrey ballet schools.

He scored a small-screen success in the 1985 television miniseries *North and South*, which was set in the American Civil War.

Swayze shot to superstardom in 1987 with his film *Dirty Dancing*, a steamy international blockbuster in which he played a dancing teacher to a young wallflower who starts to bloom.

His next big hit came in 1990's *Ghost*, where he starred opposite De-



mi Moore and Whoopi Goldberg in a hit romantic drama that won Goldberg an Oscar.

Swayze followed that up with a memorable performance in the fast-paced action-thriller *Point Break* in 1991, where he played the charismatic leader of a gang of surfing bank-robbers being hunted by Keanu Reeves.

Throughout his career Swayze's wife Lisa Niemi - whom he married in 1975 - remained a constant source of inspiration for many of his roles.

“Lisa and I have built just about every character I've done,” he told *People* magazine in 2007. “You have to understand, we have an ease ... We've been partners for a long time.”

Swayze recently acted for five months in the television series *The Beast*, in which he played an FBI agent.

“You can bet that I'm going through hell,” Swayze told Walters in January.

“I'm at the beginning of my battle. And I expect it to be a long hard battle, one that I'm gonna win according to certain rules - and the rules that the cancer isn't going away,” he added.

Swayze said he had met the diagnosis with defiance.

“I have the meanness and the passion to say, ‘To hell with you. Watch me! You watch what I pull off.’”



## Louis Hatzimihalis: FANDEMONIUM

Louis Hatzimihalis had a funny thing happen to him on the way to the footy: a wild storm blew in and he never made it to the game. A Collingwood cheer squad member who is a fishing boat skipper by trade, Hatzimihalis (pictured left) was hauling a load of Tasmanian scallops back to Melbourne earlier this year when a fierce southerly front blasted across Bass Strait. OK, so it wasn't quite *The Perfect Storm*, but it was enough to prevent him from attending Collingwood's 38 point demolition of Port Adelaide at the MCG - the first home game he'd missed in 10 years.

Most weeks, the footy wrecks with Hatzimihalis' work schedule, rather than the other way around. He'll often delay his vessel's departure until after a Pies game, even when the fish are biting. That's quite a sacrifice. But then, if there's one word that binds all fans, it's sacrifice.

All fans make sacrifices for their team. Whether it's time, money, work, comfort, dignity or sanity itself, we all leave something behind at the stadium gates. What we get in return is the right to feel part of the victory when our team wins, and the right to bellow like caged animals when they're playing. And no group of fans in any sport bellow louder or with more passion than the Collingwood cheer squad - the vanguard of the club with the second-largest membership and largest home crowds in the AFL.

I joined the Collingwood cheer squad for one ear-drum-piercing night, along with 85,000 other fans at the grudge match against Carlton at the MCG in July. Even when these two famous rivals are running 15th and 16th respectively, this cross-town showdown is huge. But when both are firmly in the finals mix - as is the case this year - it's massive. The old narrative of battlers v silver spooners, beer-swillers v latte-sippers, 14 premierships (and a record 25 runners up) v 16 resonates louder than ever. At first, I imagined myself meeting the bulk of the 200-strong official cheer squad in a watering hole near the 'G. Turns out the squad is alcohol-free, and its rendezvous point is the reserved seating behind the big sticks, an hour or so before the bounce.

Rival fans have always liked to portray Collingwood diehards as toothless freaks with limited life prospects and disturbing behavioural issues - a reference to their traditional working-class fan base and depression era (1890's) origins. The club showed it was sensitive to the latter perception in particular when it implemented a thorough clean-out of what it calls “undesirable” members at the end of the 2008 season. All members had to re-apply, and the 2009 version of the cheer squad is an incredibly diverse group, with members from all walks of life and all points of the compass.