Luke Perry
GONE TOO SOON

TRAGIC FINAL DAYS

- Heartbreaking decision to turn off life support
- His secret battle after triumphing over cancer

PLUS SHANNEN DOHERTY TELLS Us: ‘I LOVE HIM’

GONE TOO SOON

He won our hearts as Dylan McKay on 90210, but those who knew him will remember Luke Perry for his kindness and humility.

At first, it didn’t seem serious. When paramedics arrived at Luke Perry’s home in peaceful Sherman Oaks, Calif., on the morning of Feb. 27 after receiving a call that he’d experienced strokelike symptoms, they found Luke to be alert and responsive. “He was talking,” says a source close to the Riverdale star. But before long, the 52-year-old’s condition began to deteriorate. “They immediately took him to [Burbank’s] St. Joseph’s, which was the closest hospital to his home,” the source says. “When he got there and was examined, they saw he wasn’t doing well.” Luke had suffered a massive stroke. He was immediately placed under heavy sedation in order to give his brain the opportunity to heal. “Luke’s loved ones were hoping they’d pull him out of it after 48 hours or so,” the source says. “But he never recovered. It was devastating.”

Five days later, on March 4, Us has exclusively learned, Luke’s family — including his fiancé, Wendy Madison Bauer — made the difficult decision to take him off life support. “He was surrounded by Wendy; his children, Jack and Sophie; ex-wife Minnie Sharp; mother Ann Bennett; stepfather Steve Bennett; brother Tom Perry; sister Amy Coder; and other close family and friends,” Luke’s loved ones said in a statement. “The family appreciates the outpouring of support and prayers that have been extended to Luke from around the world, and respectfully request privacy in this time of great mourning.”

“The original conceit of [90210] was... about these two twins from Minnesota,” Luke said. “But... it opened up into an ensemble show. I liked that.”

By Alison Gaylin and Maria Laucke / With reporting by Brady Brown, Nicki Gagnon, Michael Clynne, Emily Conger, Mark Lupo and Emily Marcus
Luke shot to stardom at 24, when he debuted on 90210. "Once you're committed to being an actor, forget it," he said, "there's no other course in life. It's what you do."
Hollywood Mourns an Icon

"Luke Perry was my 1st crush. Eh, more like obsession (I wore pins w his face on them to school). I used to dream of making it to LA just to meet him. I never got to, but I've always heard he was a really great person."

OLIVIA MUNN

"He was a very sensitive soul who was kind, generous and he fought for the underdog. He was a strong voice and an advocate who will be so missed by all who knew him. He has left his mark — never to be forgotten."

GABRIELLE CARPENTER

"My heart is broken. I will miss you so much Luke Perry. Sending all my love to your family."

HOLLY RINGWALD

"The first time I met Luke Perry we talked about what kind of movie we wanted Buffy to be. I asked if he'd ever seen Near Dark and he gave me a look of HOW DARE YOU SIR and I knew we'd get along. Funny, committed, and always gracious. He shouldn't be gone."

JOSSEY WHEDON

God please give him a seat close to you, he deserves it."

IAN ZIERING

• DEVASTATING LOSS
For fans all over the world — and especially those closest to the former Beverly Hills, 90210 star — Luke's stroke came as an unfathomable shock. As soon as they were told of his grave condition, family members "scrambled to the hospital to be by his side," says an insider. Luke's daughter, Sophie, 18, abruptly ended a trip to Malawi, Kenya, where she'd spent the previous month. And his pro-wrestler son, Jack, 21, who goes by the stage name Jungle Boy Nate Coy, cleared his busy schedule to be by his father's side. "He's a wonderful man with a very close-knit family," says a friend of Luke's. "This is surely heartbreaking for them."

Once it was clear that Luke would not survive, his loved ones found themselves facing a grim reality that days earlier hadn't seemed even remotely possible. Wendy, 44, a psychologist Luke had been quietly dating for more than two years, was now, suddenly, facing the fact they would never walk down the aisle. His children were fatherless. And Riverdale, which shut down filming on March 4 once the news broke, was without its patriarch.

Following the announcement of his death, Luke's costars and friends took to social media, expressing their grief and remembering the actor's kindness, good humor and warmth (see above). Riverdale's producers called him "a father figure and mentor to the show's young cast," and Erin Mackenzie, head of the show's makeup department head, remembered him as "the most truly authentic man I've had the pleasure to work with."

For the devastated Riverdale crew, Luke had been in their lives since the show's 2016 debut. The
SHANNEN DOHERTY

"Luke Perry was humble and kind every time we crossed paths. I'm so sorry to hear of his passing."
SCOTT FOLEY

"Watching him on 90210 was one of the reasons why I wanted to move to L.A."
RYAN SEACREST

"I am still in shock and I have no words beyond saying he was a truly kind gentleman. He will be mourned and missed by everyone who knew him and the millions who love him."
CHRISTINE ELISE MCCARTHY

news hit even harder for his 90210 family, a tight-knit group of actors who'd shot to stardom together when the primetime teen soap took the world by storm in 1990. Shannen Doherty worked especially closely with the actor — he was her onscreen boyfriend, bad boy with a heart of gold Dylan McKay — and she's been particularly shaken. In fact, she hadn't planned to participate in the much-hyped 90210 reboot — which was coincidentally announced the day of Luke's hospitalization — but has been reconsidering in the wake of his passing. "Luke was Shannen's favorite in the cast," says an old friend of the actress. "She may participate now if they somehow pay homage to him. She just can't believe he's gone."

**NO WARNING SIGNS**
Neither can anyone else. While many early deaths come with warning signs, Luke's did not. "He seemed healthy, apart from a back problem, which he got fixed," a friend says. "He had a regular exercise routine and went to the gym down the street. He was not a smoker."

Luke's relationship with fiancé Wendy Madison Bauer (here in 2017) was so private, their engagement was known only to their closest friends.
The Cast’s Been Through So Much

While he did experience a cancer scare back in 2015 after precancerous growths were discovered during a colonoscopy, he had them promptly removed — and became an advocate for early screenings as a result. But sadly, strokes have nothing to do with other illnesses — and they can seemingly occur out of nowhere. "Stroke is not a single disease and can have many causes," says Dr. Larry B. Goldstein, a fellow of the American Neurological Association who did not treat Luke. "Many of these causes are not associated with other apparent health conditions."

MENTOR AND FRIEND
All of that is cold comfort to those facing a new life without Luke’s support and words of wisdom. A hands-on dad who happily posed with his daughter on her prom night and was often seen in the stands at his son’s wrestling matches, taping the action on his phone, Luke also provided his young Riverdale castmates with fatherly advice. "The thing I tell them — and I know this from my experience with 90210: This show will come and go, but you have these people for the rest of your life," he once told Us. "That’s one of the great takeaways of this situation, you can have these friends for the rest of your life."

Simple, sound words from a man who came of age as a superstar but grew into maturity as someone for whom basic values were more important than fame. Though he loved acting — and once said he hoped to be on a sitcom at some point — Luke had been growing weary of all the traveling he had to do for work (Riverdale shoots in Vancouver, B.C.), and during his downtime, found himself happiest with his family at their farm in Tennessee. "I just like it there," he once told Us. "I like to fish with my kids. And we have animals there. I love the cows. And I love the quiet time in the woods. I’m a country boy at heart."

To us, he’ll always be our first crush — and, with his untimely passing, the guy who broke our heart.