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# culture תרבות

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## Soccer Great

### Soccer icon Avi Cohen dies at 54

**Former Maccabi Tel Aviv, Liverpool star who was critically wounded in moped accident passes away overnight after being declared brain dead**

Neri Brenner

Avi Cohen, one of the greatest soccer Israeli soccer players of all time, died at Tel Aviv's Sourasky Medical Center overnight Wednesday at the age of 54.



Avi Cohen (archives)  
Photo: Tal Shahaar

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Cohen, the former captain of Israel's national team, was [critically wounded](#) last week when a commercial vehicle hit his moped near Ramat Gan's financial district. Physicians declared Cohen [brain dead](#) on Tuesday, but his family, at the advice of a number of rabbis, decided not to disconnect him from life support. His heart stopped beating in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

Since Cohen was admitted last week, dozens of soccer players, coaches, friends and fans flocked to the hospital.

The license of the driver who hit Cohen has been suspended for 60 days. He told police that he did not veer from his lane and that Cohen apparently rammed into the rear-view mirror of his vehicle.

Thousands of mourners joined the funeral procession on Wednesday. Hundreds filed past Cohen's coffin during a memorial ceremony at the National Stadium in Tel Aviv, the scene of some of his most memorable moments with his boyhood club, Maccabi Tel Aviv.

"It was a big, big shock for us that Avi passed away ... for the family, for the friends and of course for the nation because Avi was the captain of the national team and he was a hero," said the former Israel goalkeeper Bonnie Ginsburg, who, like Cohen, played at Glasgow Rangers.

Ginsburg and other Maccabi Tel Aviv and Israel colleagues carried Cohen's body to its final resting place at a cemetery north of Tel Aviv, where thousands of tearful mourners witnessed the burial.

Cohen became the first Israeli to play in the English top flight when he signed with Liverpool in 1979. He played with the Anfield club for more than two seasons. He made 64 appearances for Israel, 33 as captain.

Liverpool said on their website that players and fans would pay tribute to Cohen by taking part in a "period of applause" before Wednesday night's English Premier League match at home to Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Cohen's son, Tamir Cohen, plays in the Premier League for Bolton Wanderers.

Over the past few years Cohen served as the head of the Israeli soccer players' association. The sweeper began his career with Maccabi Tel Aviv, and in 1979 he was transferred to Liverpool FC, which at the time was one of the best teams in the world.

While playing for the English powerhouse Cohen won a league championship and a European championship. After another stint with Maccabi TA, Cohen joined Glasgow Rangers in 1987, but he returned to Maccabi in 1989.

**Reuters contributed to this report**