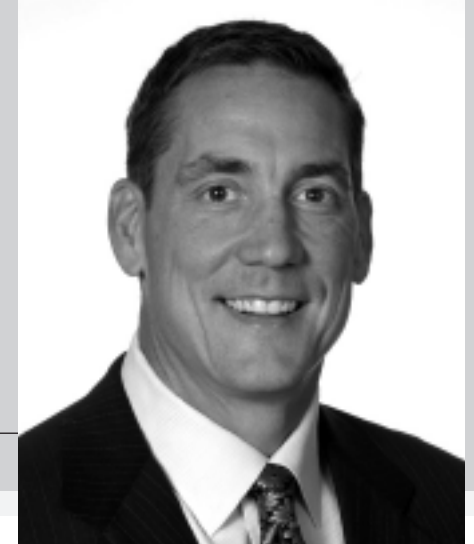




DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Todd A. Blackledge '83



To Todd Blackledge for his exemplary career as a scholar-athlete and broadcaster.

Former quarterback Todd Blackledge secured his place in Penn State history when he led the Nittany Lion football team to its first national championship in 1982. The Lions were 10-1 and ranked No. 2 when they faced the unbeaten No. 1 Georgia Bulldogs in a noisy Sugar Bowl showdown in the Superdome in New Orleans. Anyone watching that game on Jan. 1, 1983, will remember Blackledge's perfect 47-yard pass and Gregg Garrity's diving catch in the end zone in the fourth quarter to secure Penn State's victory. That play, which was featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, was one of many Blackledge made that day on his way to being named the game's MVP.

Less than a decade earlier, Blackledge's dreams of college glory centered on playing basketball at Kentucky, where his father was the offensive line coach in the mid-1970s. After his father moved on to a coaching position in Ohio, Blackledge—who played basketball, baseball, and football in high school—focused on football as his future. A blue-chip recruit, he narrowed the field to Michigan State,

Notre Dame, Tennessee, and Penn State. A visit from Coach Joe Paterno was the turning point in Blackledge's decision. "Joe Paterno told me he thought I was a quarterback who could help lead Penn State to a national championship," he has said of that visit. Paterno was right. Four years later, they celebrated that milestone together in New Orleans.

As a three-year starter at Penn State, Blackledge led the Nittany Lions to a 29-4 record, including 13 comeback victories. He still holds several Penn State records, including touchdown passes in a season (22) and career (42). His 358 yards passing in a single game, versus Miami in 1981, still ranks as fourth best in Penn State football history. Blackledge was a first-round draft pick in the NFL and played quarterback for the Kansas City Chiefs (1983-87) and Pittsburgh Steelers (1988-89) before retiring from football.

While at Penn State, Blackledge also excelled in the classroom. The speech communication major was an Academic All-American and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa honorary society as a junior. He also received the Eric Walker Award, presented to a Penn State senior who has most enhanced the esteem and

recognition of the University. In 1997, Blackledge was named to the Academic All-America Hall of Fame.

Since retiring from football, Blackledge has built a successful career in broadcasting as a studio and game analyst working for CBS, ABC, and ESPN. Blackledge was nominated for a Sports Emmy for his work as CBS Sports' lead college football analyst in the category "Outstanding Sports Personality-Sports Event Analyst" in 2004. After seven seasons with CBS, Blackledge rejoined ESPN in 2006 as lead analyst for "ESPN College Football Saturday Primetime". With 20 years of sports broadcasting experience, Blackledge finds it amusing that he's currently known for "Todd's Taste of the Town," his short video pieces on favorite eating spots in the college towns he visits. While in State College to broadcast a game, Blackledge introduced his national audience to The Diner's grilled stickies with vanilla ice cream, the same way he liked them as a student.

During the off-season, Blackledge serves as head freshman coach and varsity assistant with the North Canton Hoover High School boy's basketball team. In spring 2008, he was one of the first former NFL

players to commit to the USO's Operation Gridiron: Huddle with the Troops. Seven other players, including former Penn State teammate Kenny Jackson, traveled to Kuwait to coach a flag football tournament for military personnel. Blackledge also remains committed to Penn State, serving on the Board of Visitors for Penn State's John Curley Center for Sports Journalism.

Blackledge was one of seven former student athletes honored last year with the 2008 NCAA Silver Anniversary Award, recognizing those who excelled in collegiate sports and in their chosen professions.

A member of the Penn State Alumni Association, Blackledge and his wife of 19 years, Cherie, have four sons. They live in Canton, Ohio.

