

An Interview With:

## **STEVE YOUNG**

Moderator: Steve, would you care to make an opening statement before we begin?

STEVE YOUNG: Well, it's been quite an eventful five months, especially for my wife. We have 550 people coming as part of our group and she said it's like six weddings; I think we had 95 people at our wedding. She's been at it much more diligently than I have.

Back to my career, people always ask me, 'When did you know this was going to happen?' and I always joke, 'My tail was on fire the whole time.' I didn't know I was supposed to look up and figure stuff out like that.

It's welcome. It's a cap stone for my career, and something that -- you can put the whole thing and wrap it up in a bow now, and it's a nice feeling.

**Q. Hoping you could just indulge a local question for us. We were wondering how your high school career at Greenwich (CT) sort of served as a springboard for you in the rest of your career? And in line with that, we heard that your devout religion sort of motivated you, or you went to church every morning before school. I was wondering if that was the case?**

STEVE YOUNG: Yeah, for five years starting from eighth grade, I went every morning to Scarsdale, New York from Greenwich, Connecticut, essentially a Bible study. It started at 6:10 in the morning and we would drive back in, be back, be done at 7:00, back by 7:30 for classes, so we did that for years and years. My dad drove me when I couldn't drive, and then I started driving, became an absolute part of the day. It was Monday through Thursday. And, I don't know, I don't know what the military feels like, they have a big heads-up on getting people motivated and disciplined, but that certainly was a big part of it.

Greenwich High, hot bed, springboard of professional football players as you know. We have had a couple. I think more tennis and golf than anything probably out of that city.

But ironically, very, very solid football teams for years, for decades now. Last year Greenwich High was in the state Championship Game -- that is a common occurrence. People in

Greenwich really push for sports. And the legendary Mike **Ornato**, my coach, always has his teams well-coached. More than anything, the best thing I can say is when you have a well-coached, disciplined high school program, that's your springboard. That's all you need for an opportunity, and I'm grateful for the people at Greenwich High who did that. A lot of them are coming this weekend, Mike **Ornato** is not well enough to come, I'm sorry about that. He's been wonderful. But other coaches, Rocky DiCarlo and John Drummond and a number of other people, including many of my teammates from high school, should be one of best reunions I've had. I never had my 10- or 15- or 20-year reunions in high school, so this will be as close as I come to a reunion. It will be a lot of fun.

**Q. As you look back on your career, are you able to say what the high point was and what's low point was?**

STEVE YOUNG: Well, I don't know, it's pretty easy in getting caught up in trying to talk about the lows. The lows were places, formative moments in my career, where I didn't move forward, which is probably not why I had the highs. But the low probably came my freshman year at BYU when I was eighth-string quarterback, and I was on the scout team and there were so many guys in front of me. There was no way I was ever going to play; frustrated. Probably felt I should have gone to North Carolina to run the option or something.

But I had the dream of playing quarterback, and being Roger Staubach and I knew I needed to throw the football. I went home one day after five days of summer camp, so frustrated, called my dad and told him that was it, I'm coming home, I quit. He said, 'You can quit, but you can't come home.' No quitters. Turned out to be a formative day for me. As you leave high school, you leave home, you're not used to all of those pressures. It was a low that my dad helped me through. I don't know that I ever called him again and said I was going to quit, no matter how hard it was.

**Q. Speaking of BYU, how much credit does *Norm Chow* get in the early stages of all this?**

STEVE YOUNG: He was around and helping me. My coaches were **Ted Tollner** and

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**Mike Holmgren.** I think Norm was a receivers coach at the time, and I think Norm, we both benefited from **Ted Tollner** and **Mike Holmgren**. Ted was the one who came in after Doug Scovil who told me that he doesn't coach lefties, and Ted came in and kind of took me on and convinced **LaVell (Edwards)** to give me a shot.

Mike Holmgren and I really forged our careers together in many ways in the pros. We met up again in San Francisco with the 49ers for a number of years when I was backing up Joe. So it was an amazing script and the people that have been part of my life, but Norm was always around and he was very helpful but he took over the offense after I left.

**Q. You were on a team that almost won three straight Super Bowls, and you were on a team that stopped Dallas from winning three straight Super Bowls, can you talk about what New England is going for through and what happened with you?**

STEVE YOUNG: It's very difficult. I think that New England as has a leg up because, as you can see through free agency, threw the league into a little upheaval. You saw the Rams, the Ravens, those teams that won Super Bowl Championships were very uneven, kind of one-sided ballclubs that I think took advantage of the fact that free agency had put the league into a little bit of upheaval.

I think now the benefit is that there are teams that have figured it out, and I think that you're seeing the stability comeback into the lead, the teams that have figured it out will have a huge leg up and I don't know that everybody has got it figured out yet. I think New England is taking advantage of that. I think they have a very, very solid opportunity to make it three in a row but it is difficult. We got close to three in a row. We got to the Championship Game when we fumbled the ball late in the game against the Giants and they beat us with five field goals. It's that kind of a thing. If they do it, it's one of the most unbelievable feats in sports, no question about it.

**Q. How hard has the transition been for you going from playing the game and all that goes with it to retirement?**

STEVE YOUNG: I always liken it to going off a cliff. There's a moment when you are retired, you wake up and you realize you're not really good at anything else and you were great at something and you wish that you could keep doing it, but those days are over. It's a difficult transition for anybody.

For me, luckily, I had just gotten married, had a new baby, that was a huge transition so I didn't have time to really think about -- commiserating on football. I had a chance to do some TV; that, I thought, really helped -- to talk about it and stay close to it. And then I started a financial firm with **Brent Jones**, my old teammate. I got a chance to hang with some of my old teammates which I think is very important in the transition too. I think it really made a difference for me, and five years later, I can say that the transition is complete and I'm grateful for all of the things that happened in between.

**Q. Aside from the money, who is in a better position, Aaron Rodgers or Alex Smith?**

STEVE YOUNG: When I went to Tampa Bay, I was the first draft choice to a team who was the worst team in the league, and if it is anything like that for **Alex**, then **Alex** is in a worse spot. Tough spot to come into -- a team that is in transition and has so much going on around it, the coaching changes.

But I think the good thing for **Alex** is that there is stability coming into the organization. I think that Mike (Nolan) will be there for a while and they can be successful, that's positive. But there is such a dearth of talent -- Alex can kind of grow and learn and find his spot, and when he gets a chance to play, he'll have a huge standard to live up to, but it's a little easier obviously to get a leg up, have some talent around a team that's obviously in transition.

Who would I rather be? Honestly, I know I would rather be **Alex** just because I love playing. So even though it was tough, I loved playing more than I loved watching. I think **Alex** is in a more tough, but fun, spot.

**Q. Do you feel there may be as many young quarterbacks in the put up or disappear moment in their career now, Carr, Ramsey, Harrington, all of those guys, where they have to make the jump or get passed over?**

STEVE YOUNG: I give a lot of leeway to NFL quarterbacks -- a couple of years. And in that third or fourth year, then that's it, the leeway is over and I want to see a guy make it a career, his profession. I think you're right, there's a lot of guys kind of on the bubble that will either be guys that are journeyman-kind of guys or will find a new spot, or they will be make a claim and be in one place for a long time.

You named a lot of names for this year in unusual numbers. I think that most of them will be

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okay. I think that a guy like David Carr is doing fine. I think Joey has cut his teeth, most people are waiting to see, but I think he'll be fine. He has to do it by will. He has the will to have it this year and I think he'll be fine.

**Q. Having achieved so much in your career on the Pro Bowl, Super Bowls, where does being in the Hall of Fame rank?**

STEVE YOUNG: Well, it's different because it's obviously not on the field. I mean when you're accomplishing things on the field, I've always said, the position of quarterback in the NFL is the best job that I could ever imagine. It takes every bit of you, so to be successful, it's a tough thing. So those accomplishments that are on the field are really great.

Now this one, this one encompasses everything that was on the field. So I've got to say, not playing anymore, this is as good as it gets, and this is the end. I think that it allows you to kind of -- it allows you to put it to rest. I appreciate that because, you know, you keep thinking to yourself, maybe I didn't play long enough, maybe I should have played longer, maybe should I have played better, maybe I could have done this or that and now you go to the Hall of Fame, and now, it's done. You don't have to worry, you don't have to think, you did what you did, you put it on the line, you went out there and now it's over.

**Q. With the cap, would it even be possible to keep Joe Montana and Steve Young on the same team as long as the 49ers did?**

STEVE YOUNG: Probably not, just because, when I came on, I didn't think Joe was going to play very long, your time is coming very quickly. I don't think that you can hang around long enough for four years. I had been playing, I wanted to play, and I didn't really care where I went as long as I played. So the fact that they could hold me in place that long, I don't think that you'll see that again probably.

**Q. How special is it to be going in with Dan Marino?**

STEVE YOUNG: It's kind of fun, because we're book ends, right? Dan is the epitome of one side and I'm the epitome of one side, our style. I think that there was a style that Dan had that was very much more traditional at the time. And I think that my style, while it wasn't traditional when I started playing, I look around the league today, and absolutely, the quarterback can move around. So it's fun to watch the ebb and flow of the style of

quarterback in the league, and we absolutely represent two opposite ends of the spectrum.

**Q. When you look at your career and Dan Marino's career, how important is it for you to go into the Hall of Fame with a Super Bowl triumph, and considering he is the most prolific passer in history, how important is that Super Bowl victory for you right now?**

STEVE YOUNG: I think Super Bowls, for good or bad, are career-makers. They leave you, hopefully, with fans forever and championships. No matter how many yards you throw or how efficient you are or how many MVPs you get, people tend to respond to championships. It's just the way it is.

So the fact that I got one is very important. I don't think in the big picture it matters whether you do or you don't (win a Super Bowl), because the truth is, championships are won by a team. And quarterbacks certainly have a lot to do with it, but I don't think that -- I would not knock somebody for not winning a championship. There are tons of guys in the league today that are great, great players that are not going to see Super Bowls because they don't have the organization behind them or they don't have the talent around them. You have to realize that football is a team game and that's just part of how you judge people.

**Q. It used to be such a stigma it seemed to holding out contract-wise, and now you see with Hines Ward, you see it -- is it a cyclical thing?**

STEVE YOUNG: I think you're seeing kind of a boldness that comes from players. You know, players traditionally have been kept in a very tight box. I've always laughed at the idea of a contract, because a contract means that the two parties are committed to each other. And we all know an NFL contract, you're committed for today but tomorrow is not guaranteed for a player.

So I think that you're seeing that players are just starting to get bolder and guys that are willing to take risks with their team at that time -- with free agency, guys are moving so much and maybe not affiliated with their team. It's more, 'Hey, look, I've got one shot at this.' They are getting much more bold and want to go get the money that they feel like they deserve. I'm afraid that if -- this is going to be an interesting thing to watch this next couple of weeks.

**Q. Two-part question, as you look back on your career, did one place always prepare**

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**you for the next? And at what point did you stop playing, for lack of a better term, with a chip on your shoulder, to play like you felt like you had to prove something?**

STEVE YOUNG: Well, you've got to remember, when I showed up at BYU, Jim McMahon was the quarterback and he left with 73 NCAA records, and was one of best college quarterbacks you would ever want to see play. So playing with a chip on my shoulder is not necessarily the way I would look at it. I would look at it like I have a huge standard here and I have to just keep chopping wood. I just went after it day after day after day.

It's funny that five, six years later, I found myself in the same spot with Joe Montana. But I turned it around. I think it was a tremendous opportunity and as I look back now, going into the Hall of Fame, I look at why is that? And two of the reasons, the absolute key reasons why I'm going into the Hall of Fame is that I followed **Jim McMahon** in college one of the great players in college, and **Joe Montana**, one of great players as a pro. As quarterbacks, you could not be tutored any better than watching those guys play. I hated watching, but looking at the end, going in this weekend, obviously it was a good precedent.

**Q. Given what you just said about contracts and holdouts, what's your take on Terrell Owens situation with the Eagles?**

STEVE YOUNG: Terrell is great at theatrics. In that respect, you look at the contract that he signed last year, you knew that this year was a leverage year for the Eagles to find out whether things were going to work out. I think Terrell at the end of the year realized maybe too late that was the case.

If I were Terrell, because of the nature of him, I would probably call and say, 'Hey, look, I'm upset, but, I want to lead the league in receiving this year, and when I do, final regular season game, I'm going to have a ceremony at half-time.' I think people would respond to that. I think people would respond to that kind of a bold statement. I'm going to go prove that I'm the best receiver in the game, again, and then I'm going to -- I think that's probably the best way to handle it.

If he shows up for work and things happen, no matter what his words say, I know him, he'll play hard, he'll fight hard and he'll have a great season.

**Q. Can you talk about the upcoming regular season game in Mexico City between the Cardinals and 49ers?**

STEVE YOUNG: I'm still in my off-season mode. That's great. I think that the league is going to continue that. Chad Lewis, all-pro for the Eagles, speaks fluent Mandarin and has been to China twice in the off-season. I know it's along distance, but I think the league is interested in spreading the game worldwide. I have no idea about this -- I think there might be more games internationally if this works. I think it's a great thing.

**Q. You got your law degree in 1994 from the J. Reuben Clark Law School?**

STEVE YOUNG: Yes, I did.

**Q. That's kind of a rare asset for a pro player. How do you think that prepared you or helped you in your understanding the complexities of the NFL game?**

STEVE YOUNG: Well, more than anything, it drove me a little crazy backing up Joe and not playing much, and I was going nuts. So law school was a help more than anything in the off-season to get -- I think that a lot of quarterbacking is processing information, processing it quickly and efficiently. There are a ton of guys who are playing in this league who have not made it because they could not process information over and over again. You've seen it, call a play and on the third play there's this bonehead move that happened and you can't explain. Too much was going on too fast, and they couldn't process it fast enough.

I think that training yourself is only going to help in the NFL. Memorizing -- law school is a lot of memorization and I learned from watching Joe, a lot of football memorization. It really paid off. When you know everything that's going on with you, you can really get good pretty fast.

**Q. Did you used to push your car around Greenwich as a training method?**

STEVE YOUNG: You know how it is, when you're young, you read books, and used to do book reports, and every book report was a football story or about the NFL. I had a series of books I read about my heroes, and one of them I read about was Dick Butkus and he wrote about how he got in shape by pushing his car around. We were in high school, we thought that stuff was so cool, I had a '65 Oldsmobile Cutlass that we put in neutral and pushed around our neighborhood. And we decided after about three days of this that there's no way that Dick Butkus had done this with a '65 Oldsmobile Cutlass, it was too heavy. We

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gave up. We figured it had to be kind of a Honda or something, there's no way.

**Q. In the '70s your family made a vacation trip to Canton to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. What do you remember about that, do you remember anything about it, and what will it be like when you're back there again?**

STEVE YOUNG: Well, I'm a huge fan of sports and football. So when we were driving cross-country, I begged my dad to go to Canton so we could see the museum and the see the guys that I've heard about. My hero at the time was Roger Staubach, he wasn't in the Hall of Fame at the moment. I think it was a great trip and there was a great picture we found, my sister dug it up of all people. When I got into the Hall of Fame, she called my mom and said, 'Yeah, there was a picture.' My mom went and dug it up. There we are – right in Canton – a picture of me when I'm 12, 13 years old. It was awesome.

**Q. You mentioned that football was the ultimate team sport, but I remember the scene when you won the Super Bowl when you were saying that somebody took the monkey off your back, does that situation in your career represent a personal goal as far as proving yourself and to others that you were at that specific moment the ultimate quarterback in the NFL?**

STEVE YOUNG: To have success in football you have to live up to the standard you've left for yourself. I was fortunate to follow some great people to show me what it was really going to take. I regret that moment in the Super Bowl because I don't think it was reflective of how I truly felt. I really did feel it was a great opportunity. Although I was relieved to win the Super Bowl, and I know right after the game, I told them, that's one, but who knew that that was the only one and that we wouldn't win three or four more.

Look, at the end of the day, for me, I look back from Greenwich High School to BYU to the **L.A. Express** with **Sid Gillman**, one of the great coaches of all-time, and a couple of years in Tampa and then what happened in San Francisco. It's a phenomenal story to go through as I prepare for this week, and to think on and really reflect on everything that has happened and to be thankful for everybody. I mean, think about it. All of the guys that coached me: **Mike Holmgren, Ted Tollner, Sid Gillman, John Hadl, Mike Holmgren** again, **Mike Shanahan, Bill Walsh, Steve Mariucci**, I couldn't have messed up that bad with that group of people pulling me around. Think

about every quarterback having a bevy of Hall of Fame-type coaches tutoring them, and I'm very, very grateful. I look forward to this week, I appreciate you all joining us on this call. Looking forward throughout the year to talking football.

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