

H2P

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
ATHLETICS MAGAZINE
SUMMER 2023

DARRELLE REVIS GIVES PITT A PERFECT 10 IN CANTON



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Catching Up with Softball
Head Coach Jenny Allard

Teammates for Life:
Adam Gunn & Austin Ransom

Double the Fun with MBB
in Spain

The Dulaks Write their Script



2023 FALL HOME SCHEDULE

MEN'S SOCCER

Oct. 6 **VIRGINIA TECH*** 7PM
Oct. 17 **DUQUESNE** 7PM
Oct. 21 **DUKE*** 7PM

MATCHES PLAYED AT AMBROSE URBANIC FIELD

FOOTBALL

Oct. 14 **LOUISVILLE***
Nov. 4 **FLORIDA STATE***
Nov. 16 **BOSTON COLLEGE*** 7PM

GAMES PLAYED AT ACRISURE STADIUM



SCAN TO
BUY YOUR
TICKETS
TODAY!

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Oct. 5 **DUKE*** 7PM
Oct. 8 **WAKE FOREST*** 1PM
Oct. 26 **VIRGINIA TECH*** 7PM

MATCHES PLAYED AT AMBROSE URBANIC FIELD

VOLLEYBALL

Oct. 1 **SYRACUSE*** 1PM
Oct. 6 **GEORGIA TECH*** 7PM
Oct. 8 **CLEMSON*** 1PM
Oct. 18 **VIRGINIA*** 7PM
Oct. 27 **VIRGINIA TECH*** 7PM
Oct. 29 **WAKE FOREST*** 1PM
Nov. 18 **LOUISVILLE*** TBD//THE PETE
Nov. 22 **MIAMI*** 7PM

MATCHES PLAYED AT FITZGERALD FIELD HOUSE

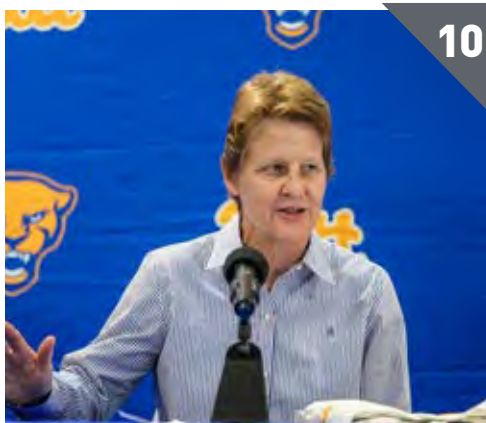


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Lifelong Friends

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Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, native; Pitt Panther football star; first-round NFL draft pick; and four-time All-Pro cornerback Darrelle Revis is inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. See the cover story beginning on page 24.

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Heather Lyke at the Red, White & Boom workout event with student-athletes in July 2023

Dear Pitt friends,

What an incredible year it has been! We are so proud to have a national champion, two Final Four teams, a Sweet Sixteen team, All-Americans, ACC Champions and numerous teams and individuals in the hunt in postseason play.

Our athletics accomplishments in 2022-23 culminated in yet another rise in the annual LEARFIELD Division I Directors' Cup standings. We finished 52nd nationally, our top ranking since 1994-95, with a school-record 469 points.

Our successes in the competitive arena were bolstered by record-breaking accomplishments in the classroom and the community. Academically, we reached new heights, with 343 student-athletes earning ACC Academic Honor Roll distinctions and 211 being named to All-ACC Academic teams. Our Panthers' impact in the community continued to grow, as our student-athletes combined for more than 7,500 hours of community service. For the third consecutive year, their efforts ranked in the top two among all Power Five universities.

Pitt's commitment to comprehensive excellence and unwavering belief in the importance of every student-athlete's experience were clearly demonstrated

in the achievements of this past year. Such unprecedented success does not happen without a tremendous university and outstanding leadership. We have been incredibly fortunate to have had Chancellor Patrick Gallagher as our leader over the last nine years. Pitt Athletics would not be where it is today without his steadfast support. Likewise, we could not have achieved such success without extraordinary people like you. Your support truly is invaluable.

The excitement of a new year is upon us, and we have a lot to look forward to in 2023-24. We are excited to welcome Joan Gabel as our new chancellor. Her belief in the value that athletics bring to our university will help us to continue to elevate Pitt Athletics and provide our student-athletes with an extraordinary experience. She will be an exceptional partner as we continue to advance Pitt Athletics.

In addition to our new chancellor, we recently welcomed three new head coaches to Pitt: Tory Verdi (women's basketball), Casey Jo MacPherson (gymnastics) and Jenny Allard (softball). Even in their brief time at Pitt, they already have made a noticeable impact

on building winning foundations for those programs.

Furthermore, following the groundbreaking this past year, we will continue to see lots of construction on campus in the coming year as we move closer to seeing our vision for the Victory Heights Arena and Sports Performance Center come to life. Check out the live camera view of the construction on our website at pittsburghpanthers.com/VHstream.

As we begin a new year, remember that with great success comes greater expectations. Without a doubt, there will be higher expectations for Pitt Athletics in 2023-24. We made history last year, but this is only the beginning. Please join us as we set out to rewrite the record books yet again in 2023-24.

Hail to Pitt!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heather Lyke', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Lyke
Director of Athletics

**25 NCAA
QUALIFIERS**

CROSS COUNTRY (2)
WRESTLING (6)
INDOOR TRACK & FIELD (2)
SWIMMING & DIVING (15)

**TWO FINAL FOUR
APPEARANCES**

MEN'S SOCCER | VOLLEYBALL



**INDIVIDUAL
NATIONAL CHAMPION**

NINO BONACCORSI (WRESTLING)

**FOUR NCAA
TOURNAMENT TEAMS**

WOMEN'S SOCCER | MEN'S SOCCER
VOLLEYBALL | MEN'S BASKETBALL

**SUN BOWL
CHAMPIONS**
FOOTBALL



BUILDING CHAMPIONS • COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE



COMPLIANCE CORNER

Pitt student-athletes excel in the classroom, in the community and their chosen athletic arena. While the sports accolades of Pitt student-athletes often garner the most attention, their achievements in the classroom are equally impressive.

The NCAA dictates academic requirements all student-athletes must meet, including maintaining good standing at their academic institution. In addition, Pitt teams and the entire athletic department are held to certain yearly academic metrics.

Student-Athlete Eligibility Requirements

Each semester and academic year, all student-athletes are required to meet credit hour, GPA and progress-toward-degree standards based upon their collegiate enrollment.

Mandatory Credit Hour Achievement

- (6) degree applicable credits earned (9 in football in fall)
- (18) degree applicable credits earned over the fall and spring semesters combined
- (24) degree applicable credits earned prior to the start of their second year

GPA Requirements

- Maintain good academic standing in their degree program

Progress-Toward-Degree

- Declare a major prior to their 5th full-time term;
- Earn 40% of a degree before their 5th full-time term;
- Earn 60% of a degree before their 7th full-time term;
- Earn 80% of a degree before their 9th full-time term;

It is important to note these are NCAA academic eligibility minimum baseline standards. Pitt student-athletes routinely outperform these requirements.



Pictured from left to right are Brandon George, Buddy Mack III, Reaia Floyd and Eli Kosanovich at the 2023 Spring Graduation Reception.

NCAA Academic Eligibility Reporting Metrics

Beyond these eligibility requirements, Pitt is also required to report annual academic metrics to the NCAA:

Academic Progress Rate

- Measures each scholarship student-athlete's academic progress toward degree and the team overall
- The score is generated by assessing 2 criteria for each individual and the team:
 - Academic eligibility
 - Retention at Pitt as an enrolled student-athlete

Graduation Success Rate

- Similar to the Federal Graduation Rate (FGR), the NCAA's Graduation Success Rate (GSR) calculates the number of scholarship student-athletes who graduate within a six-year period.
- The primary distinction from FGR is that GSR takes also accounts for transfers in and out of the institution.

Please direct compliance-related inquiries to the Office of Compliance, Financial and Student Services at compliance@athletics.pitt.edu.

Pitt ²⁰²²⁻²³ Academic Year

NUMBER OF **ACADEMIC**
ALL-ACC SELECTIONS

211

NUMBER OF ACC
HONOR ROLL
SELECTIONS

343

NUMBER OF **STUDENT-ATHLETES**
TO EARN A **4.0 GPA** ACROSS
THE FALL AND SPRING TERMS

63

18

Student-athletes posted
a 4.0 GPA for the year

157

Student-athletes with
a 3.5 or higher GPA

12

Teams earned above
a 3.2 GPA

99% CAREER OUTCOME
WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF
GRADUATING OVER THE PAST
EIGHT YEARS



3.197 **OVERALL STUDENT**
ATHLETE 2022-23 GPA



PANTHER CLUB

PANTHER CLUB MEMBERS
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Real Estate Services



OFFICIAL **REALTOR** OF PITT ATHLETICS

The Next Generation of Donors

Written by Maggie Rollicheck

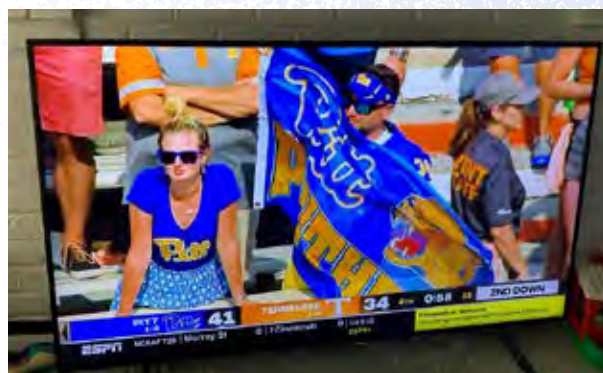
In the world of philanthropy, millennials and Gen Z-ers are commonly referred to as “next-gen” donors, the up-and-coming generations getting involved in giving.



Adam and Ashley Dulak, along with their golden retrievers Blitzen (in blue) and Elle (in white), take a family photo in front of the Cathedral of Learning.



This past spring, Adam and Ashley welcomed and introduced their newborn son, Nicholas, to the Pitt Fandom by cradling him in a helmet.



The Dulaks love to support the football team at as many away games as possible (pictured here at the Pitt vs. Tennessee game in 2021).



Despite a few travel challenges, Adam and Ashley made it to the ACC Championship Game in 2021 with just a few minutes to spare before kickoff. Pictured here after the game, the Dulaks pose next to a huge replica of the ACC Championship trophy.

When the University of Pittsburgh Department of Athletics launched The Script Society in 2020, a core group of generous and dedicated philanthropic donors began to form. Three years later, an unexpected trend has emerged: The group has continued to expand in numbers while the average age of its members has steadily gone down.

Adam and Ashley Dulak joined The Script Society this year, becoming the youngest members of the group. Both proud Pitt alums, Ashley chose the University for its pharmacy program and her desire to attend a university with a strong athletic reputation to enhance her college experience. Adam and Ashley met their first day at Pitt and have been inseparable ever since, making the University a special place for them.

The two stayed connected to the University of Pittsburgh after graduation. Despite leaving Pittsburgh after completing their undergraduate degrees, the two knew they eventually wanted

to return to the city. Ashley is now an assistant professor in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, teaching pharmacology to physician assistant and physical therapy students, and Adam works as a physician assistant for UPMC.

Because athletics were such a prominent part of their collegiate experience, the two knew that when they returned to Pittsburgh, they would pick up where they left off, attending every home football and men's basketball game possible. They became season ticket holders in both sports, giving philanthropically when and where they could.

As Adam and Ashley have progressed in their careers, they have expanded their involvement, becoming more philanthropically involved with Pitt Athletics. As a faculty member, Ashley acknowledges the importance of seeing student-athletes as students first and wanted to find ways to support their

education. Like many people, Adam and Ashley graduated with student loan debt and understood how valuable scholarship assistance would be to student-athletes. This understanding is what prompted the couple to join The Script Society, choosing to designate part of their gift to the Student-Athlete Success Fund. They wanted to support student-athletes in the classroom across all sports, majors and future career paths.

Ashley sums up the hope for the next generation of donors best: "I know our gift is not what every donor is able to give, but I hope that every donor is able to look at the longevity of what they give to realize that giving, even in small amounts, every year still provides a great foundation. You don't have to wait until you are established in your life and give a large amount. Even giving small amounts collectively can really help to propel individual teams and the department forward." 📞



CATCHING UP WITH JENNY ALLARD

Pitt's New Softball Head Coach

Written by Elisabeth Schmidt

When Heather Lyke launched the search for the new leader of the University of Pittsburgh softball program, she knew that her old Michigan teammate would be the perfect fit not only for the future of the program but most importantly for the student-athlete experience.



Jenny Allard (left) was introduced as Pitt's softball head coach by Director of Athletics Heather Lyke on July 12, 2023.

"This is not the first time I have tried to hire [Coach Allard], and when I launched the search, two thoughts came to mind: It was either three strikes and you're out or the third time is the charm. Lucky for us and Pitt, we did not strike out, and the third time is the charm."

Jenny Allard was named the Pitt softball head coach on June 19, 2023, after spending the past 28 seasons at the helm of the Harvard softball program, where she was the Ivy League's longest-tenured and winningest softball coach. Allard, who was named to the National Fastpitch

Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2022, owns a 688-518-4 overall record, including a 342-130-1 Ivy League mark.

During her tenure, Allard led Harvard to nine Ivy League titles, six 30-win seasons and all eight of its NCAA Championship appearances. She coached seven Ivy League Players of the Year, eight Ivy League Pitchers of the Year, seven Ivy League Rookies of the Year and three All-Americans as well as 78 first-team, 75 second-team and 51 honorable mention All-Ivy League selections.

"I am excited to be the next leader of Pitt Softball," says Allard. "Pitt is on the rise, and I am ready to bring great energy and determination to the softball program. Pitt Softball has hardworking student-athletes, the backing of an amazing athletic department and University and support from the larger community of Pittsburgh. Vartabedian Field will be an exciting place to be in the coming years."

Prior to her coaching career, Allard had a prolific collegiate career as a player at Michigan, where she and Lyke were

“

Coach Allard set the standard for excellence as a player and has continued that standard as a current Hall of Fame coach. Her intellect, her work ethic and her ability to work with others, in my opinion, are unmatched.”

– Heather Lyke
Director of Athletics



Allard (second from left) with her sister, Kathy (left); her sister-in-law, Trisha; and her brother, David

teammates from 1988 to 1990. Allard spent time at third base before stepping into the circle to fill a pitching vacancy during her junior season in 1989. She was a four-time All-Big Ten selection (first team – 1987, 1989, 1990; second team – 1988), a two-time First Team Midwest Region pick and an Academic All-Big Ten honoree as a senior.

“Coach Allard set the standard for excellence as a player and has continued that standard as a current Hall of Fame coach,” says Lyke. “Her intellect, her work ethic and her ability to work with others, in my opinion, are unmatched. She’s always worked hard, trained hard and had great expectations of herself and others, and she will bring those

expectations and sense of teamwork to our team.

“Sometimes the key to success, they say, is being at the right place at the right time. I believe that not only are we in the right place at the right time but, most importantly, we have the right person and the right opportunity. I remember [Coach Allard] telling me that ‘I never knew I could teach the game as well as I could play the game,’ and that is a gift, to be really good at teaching the game you love and, most importantly, to love teaching the game.” 🎯



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PANTHERS AND PETS

For Gerry Delon, it really was as simple as putting two and two together.

Pictured from left to right are Pat Bostick; Radagast; Gerry Delon, executive director of Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh; and Julie and Charlie Partridge. Charlie is Pitt's assistant head coach/defensive line.

Written by Craig Meyer

Since he was a 6-year-old in Hopewell Township, Pennsylvania, watching Pitt and native son Tony Dorsett win the national championship in 1976, Gerry Delon has been a passionate supporter of Pitt athletics, beginning with the football program and later branching out to the school's other athletic teams. All these years later, he has a signed Pitt football helmet prominently displayed in his office, along with a framed photo of the Sports Illustrated cover documenting Pitt's national title with Dorsett, with the triumphant headline "PITT IS IT!"

Alongside that fervor for Pitt was another source of joy for Delon: a deep affection not just for his beloved Panthers but for all animals, particularly dogs.

Eventually, over the course of a long and distinguished career, those two loves merged into one.

Now the executive director of Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh (HARP), Delon not only oversees an organization that cares for, nurtures and improves the lives of animals throughout the region, he also works closely with some of the most prominent figures within the Pitt Department of Athletics in fulfilling that mission, from Chris Bickell '97 Head Football Coach Pat Narduzzi and his wife, Donna, to Senior Associate Athletic Director of Development for Major Gifts Pat Bostick and football Assistant Head Coach Charlie Partridge.

HARP was the result of a merger of two long-standing rescue groups in the region, the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society and the Animal Rescue League of Western Pennsylvania.



HUMANE ANIMAL RESCUE of Pittsburgh

Today, several years after those two bodies combined into one, it is Western Pennsylvania's largest nonprofit animal welfare organization. Its mission, as its website states, is "caring for animals, inspiring communities" while living up to its four core characteristics: accessible, ethical, innovative and inclusive.

While it functions primarily as an adoption center for animals in need of a happy home, it's much more than that. HARP operates two low-cost veterinary medical centers, where more than 6,500 animals are treated in an average year. It works not just with domestic animals but also with wild ones, with a licensed wildlife facility that specializes in caring for sick, injured or orphaned animals. More than 4,000 injured animals are treated by the center annually, with a diverse array of animals accounting for that large figure: more than 2,300 mammals, 1,700 birds and 50 reptiles. It also operates a free store, where members of the community can get collars, leashes and other pet-related equipment at no charge.

As an open-door shelter, HARP lives by a mission to accept any animal from any source, allowing it to treat a large number of animals and make that much bigger of an impact. It operates a

transport program in which it works with several dozen animal shelters within a three- or four-hour radius of Pittsburgh (where smaller shelters in more rural areas don't have access to the same kind of medications and resources) and brings those animals back to Pittsburgh to find them a home. HARP is, as Delon puts it, a "regional resource."

"We think big," he says. "There's a number of ways that that's kind of translated into where we've evolved to today. Part of it was trying to connect with people like Pat Bostick and Donna Narduzzi, people who can positively influence our ability to fulfill our mission. Thinking big also meant stretching the boundaries of what a traditional animal shelter was. In the old days, it was the dog pound. At our core, we are still an animal shelter, but what we realized was [that] there's a whole human ownership to pet ownership. I know how much joy it brings to my life. Helping pets and helping people is an interactive relationship that ultimately helps both. We could fulfill our mission of helping animals by helping people and by being a positive influence in the community at the same time."

Delon's work with HARP, and the organization's connection with Pitt Athletics, was the result of a years-long process.

For nearly two decades, Delon was the chief financial officer for NEP Group, Inc., the prominent Pittsburgh-based production company that helped to build and continues to help operate Pitt Studios. He was instrumental in establishing the NEP Production Hub in the Petersen Events Center, which houses all of Pitt's athletic video production capabilities. This state-of-the-art facility was named in honor of NEP's many contributions to Pitt Athletics, including the design and outfitting of Pitt Studios. Delon had been connected with his beloved hometown university well before that partnership existed, having graduated from Pitt and been a Pitt donor for years. During that time, he struck up a relationship with Bostick. Shortly after Delon took over as HARP's executive director early in 2022 after years of serving on the organization's board, he reached out to Bostick—who, like Delon, is a proud Boston Terrier owner—to see if he would be interested in joining HARP's board. It didn't take very long to get an

affirmative answer—and an indication that there were other members of the Pitt Athletics community who were all too happy to offer what they could to HARP.

"The minute I offered him the opportunity to join, it was immediate," Delon says. "It's very, very evident that our mission and how we help animals just really resonates with those folks."

Through his connection with Bostick, Delon began to forge strong ties with others within Pitt Athletics. Bostick reached out to Donna Narduzzi, who he knew well as a fellow animal lover, and she, too, joined HARP's board. From knowing the Narduzzis, Delon struck up a relationship with Partridge, who enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to help HARP. Partridge even appears in a HARP commercial with his aptly named bulldog, Meatball.

"Julie and I love the opportunity to promote and support the amazing work being done at HARP. They successfully rescue, rehabilitate, place and continue to support animals and their forever families. HARP has a wonderful mission," Partridge says.

"Charlie especially just lights up," Delon says.

For Bostick, who works with Delon and his team on cultivating resources and identifying animal lovers who are willing to adopt animals and financially support HARP, the impact of his time with the organization has been profound.

"It's the number of animals they're able to rehome. It's their open-door policy," Bostick says. "I think in a lot of senses, there's a misconception that the animals that go into shelters are always neglected and harmed when, actually, there are some very sad circumstances that required owners to give up their animals, whether it was health or money or having to move or whatever it may be. That way, with the best of intentions, HARP is able to make the owner feel good about their decision and give the animal a loving home to spend their life in. When you put yourself in someone else's shoes, whether it's the owner or the animal itself, you realize what a public service Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh plays in our region. It's hard to ignore and hard not to be impressed by."

Delon sees something similar in Pat Narduzzi, the Panthers' hard-nosed Youngstown-raised head football coach



Radagast was adopted just two days after he was featured in a tweet with several Pitt players.



“

Julie and I love the opportunity to promote and support the amazing work being done at HARP. They successfully rescue, rehabilitate, place and continue to support animals and their forever families. HARP has a wonderful mission.”

– Charlie Partridge

Coach Partridge enjoying his visit to Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh and spending time with the animals

who’s not too tough to let his affection for animals show.

“Pat’s an intense guy, but you sort of crack through his intensity when you see things like his support of HARP,” Delon says. “He’s always willing to lend a hand. It’s great to have people like that in your corner.”

The bond between HARP and Pitt doesn’t end with Bostick and members of the football program.

The defending two-time national semifinalist volleyball team has worked at HARP events as volunteers, while the softball and women’s soccer teams have participated in days of service there. Last season, HARP received a \$500 donation from PGT Trucking for every Pitt sack, which was no small gesture for a team that got to the opposing quarterback 48 times in 2022, the second-best mark among all NCAA

Division I Football Bowl Subdivision teams. Pitt donor Chris Valasek also is a notable supporter of HARP.

Between those contributions of time and financial support, Delon says that Pitt is perhaps “our most valuable corporate and brand ambassador.” It’s a symbiotic relationship that Delon believes will only grow stronger with time.

“It’s through those relationships and my love of animals and Pitt football that, when given the opportunity, people like Pat, Donna and Charlie saw a cause that was also near and dear to their heart: helping animals and helping this organization,” Delon says. “We couldn’t be more thankful for what they have done for us and continue to do for us. The relationships we have with them have helped us reach untold numbers of people who have become adopters and donors. It’s just been a great example of

how one relationship—a little kid’s love of Pitt football—can make one thing lead to another.”

“A lot of people, me included, are extremely passionate about Pitt athletics, and I think to see somebody like Coach Narduzzi or Pat Bostick or Charlie Partridge embracing this organization, that says something,” Delon says. “That’s ultimately, I think, a testament to who we are as an organization and the good that we do in the community. The most tangible aspect of what those folks do, in addition to their generous financial support, is just being an ambassador for the organization. People look to them. Their passion and people’s passion for animals in general—to be able to connect those two things for us has been invaluable.” 🐾

To adopt, donate or volunteer at HARP, please visit humaneanimalrescue.org or email Gerry at gdelon@humaneanimalrescue.org.



Kevin Smith: Media Renaissance Man

Written by Craig Meyer

After years of practice, Kevin Smith is an early riser, one who regularly gets to Pitt's campus at 4:45 a.m. for a television and news practicum course that he teaches at 6 a.m. on Fridays.

At first, the early arrival allowed Smith to begin his workday in solitude at a time when few others are on campus—if they're even awake at all. Soon enough, though, something funny started to happen: Smith wasn't alone for very long.

Virtually any college student will find an early morning class to be a challenge, let alone one that begins before the sun rises, but by 5:15, Smith noticed that he had more than half of his students already in the building.

"The students race me to the class," he says with a laugh.

If racing to class at that hour seems unusual, it's because it is. But then again, Pitt's burgeoning television and broadcast arts program led by Smith is anything but ordinary.

The latest step in the lengthy career of a media Renaissance man who has written screenplays, worked in radio, produced and appeared on air for television and reported for newspapers is at his alma mater, where he teaches and helped to design the curriculum for a television and broadcast arts certificate program that didn't exist at the University only a handful of years ago. With Pitt Studios at the Petersen Events Center serving as a laboratory of sorts, the program has grown significantly over the course of its relatively short existence, comprehensively preparing students through its classes and ultimately setting them up for fruitful professional opportunities after graduation.

Though Smith isn't one to take credit for that rapid rise, his work and diligence have been invaluable in not only getting the nascent field of study off the ground but getting it to a point that has far exceeded most reasonable expectations.

"The University of Pittsburgh is not me. It's not the administration. It's the students," Smith says. "That's the key to the whole University. That's what I found out when I was here.

THE 1981 PITT PANTHER FOOTBALL TEAM



Kevin (front row, #1) with the 1981 Pitt football team.



The University of Pittsburgh is not me. It's not the administration. It's the students. That's the key to the whole University."

– Kevin Smith
Creator of Pitt's Television and Broadcast Arts Certificate program

That's the object of what we're doing. This has to be the students. They have to own it. They have to want it. They have to love it. It's their curriculum, and that's what it's become. I'm just kind of the caretaker of it. They're the ones who make it work."

In the 18-credit certificate program, which is part of the University's Film and Media Studies Program, students receive instruction and training in production and on-air work. The expanding curriculum has been designed by Smith over the past five years, starting from a blank slate into something much more substantive after what Smith admitted was a bit of a trial-and-error process.

When Smith began to create the program, he questioned what exactly he wanted from it. So, almost 40 years after his days as a student on campus, he began taking classes again, giving him the valuable chance to get an up-close, in-depth view of what his pupils faced.

"I did that because I wanted to understand what the demands were on the student and what the stresses were on the student," Smith says. "That way, I could design the curriculum for the student—not for me, just for the student.

That helped me immensely. I got a good understanding of what they want."

Even without that immersive experience, Smith can relate to his Pitt students on a fundamental level. After all, he was once in their position.

A New Jersey native, Smith arrived in Oakland in 1978 to play football during a time in which the Panthers were among the sport's best, most dominant programs. All these years later, he can still remember walking down Forbes Avenue on one of his first days on campus and seeing the Cathedral of Learning pop up in the distance. The mere sight of the iconic 535-foot building reassured him that he had not only chosen a college but found a home.

"The campus, the city, everything lived up to what I hoped and prayed it would be," Smith says. "All these years later, I'm back here, and it feels like home. It has always felt like home from the moment I stepped on campus."

Smith was part of the Pitt football program at an opportune time. The Panthers went 41-7 over Smith's four seasons at the school and had future NFL players at virtually every position,

including five who went on to become Pro Football Hall of Famers. A wide receiver, Smith was awed by the talent around him, particularly a young quarterback he caught balls from by the name of Dan Marino, but with that came a realization.

"Trust me, I wasn't anything significant whatsoever on the team with that kind of talent," he says. "By sophomore year, I was like 'OK, I wonder what I'm going to do for a living?'"

It didn't take long for that question to be answered.

Shortly after leaving Oakland, the proud Pitt grad began working in New York City radio, doing sports, writing comedy and working in the mailroom for a variety-style morning show called "The Morning Zoo" that competed against the likes of Howard Stern and Don Imus.

From there, he returned to Pittsburgh to write for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette while putting in additional hours learning the nuances of television a few blocks away at KDKA-TV. His hours of watching the behind-the-scenes magic of television helped him to put together a reel, which he sent out to various stations only to get, he says, "500



Kevin and his former teammate, Dan Marino, on a TV pilot shoot at South Stadium in Pittsburgh

billion rejections.” WTAE-TV, however, hired him as a writer and producer. He rewarded their faith, earning the station three Regional Emmy nominations and winning an Edward R. Murrow Award for outstanding achievements in broadcast and digital journalism.

For years, Smith had an interest in screenwriting. Earlier in his career, he had a chance meeting with director, producer and writer Bruce Paltrow while watching a New York Knicks game at a movie wrap party and asked to pick his brain. Paltrow became Smith’s first mentor. Even as he worked at newspapers and television stations, he found time to craft scripts. As he saw it, it wasn’t work, it was fun.

It was at his next stop, as an executive producer for the Pittsburgh Penguins, when a new door opened. After working up the gumption to ask him, Smith had then Penguins owner Howard Baldwin, a prominent movie producer, read some scripts he had written and provide him with some notes. Baldwin was impressed and convinced Smith to send his scripts to studios. Within a couple of weeks, two of those scripts were optioned, and before he knew it, Smith was moving to Los Angeles, California.

Over two decades, he wrote for and worked with Academy Award-nominated

actors, directors and producers on films, television comedies and dramas, and miniseries. Perhaps the most notable of the projects on which he worked was “Pride,” a 2007 film starring Terrence Howard that Smith cowrote about a man who started and coached an all-Black swim team in 1970s Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

With most of his relatives back East and a chance to work remotely, he and his family moved to Pittsburgh six years ago. A group of friends took him on a tour of the early stages of Pitt Studios, when it was largely a barren space. He was shown renderings and images of what it ultimately would look like, but it was hard to imagine it in that moment.

When he was asked if he wanted to be involved, he initially balked. But when he found out that Pitt’s associate athletic director for broadcast and video production, Paul Barto, was heading the project, his mind quickly changed. The two knew each other from Smith’s days at WTAE, when Barto was a college student at Waynesburg University but would come up to Pittsburgh, edit all night, sleep on the floor and go back in the morning

for class. Smith always remembered that drive, which was paired with an intelligence in the field that made Barto, in Smith’s words, “a certified genius.”

“Knowing Paul was running the place, there was zero chance I would have said no, because he’s that good,” Smith says. “If you get a chance to work with people who are literally the best in an industry, you never say no. It’s as simple as that. That’s why I said yes.”

As a teaching professor and director of undergraduate studies in broadcast, Smith has spent the past several years using the resources available at Pitt Studios to maximize and enhance the experience of his students. With the help of Barto, Assistant Athletic Director of Broadcast and Video Production Casey Garrow and others, Pitt Studios, widely regarded as the best in-house broadcast facility in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), has been an essential tool in the curriculum Smith designed.

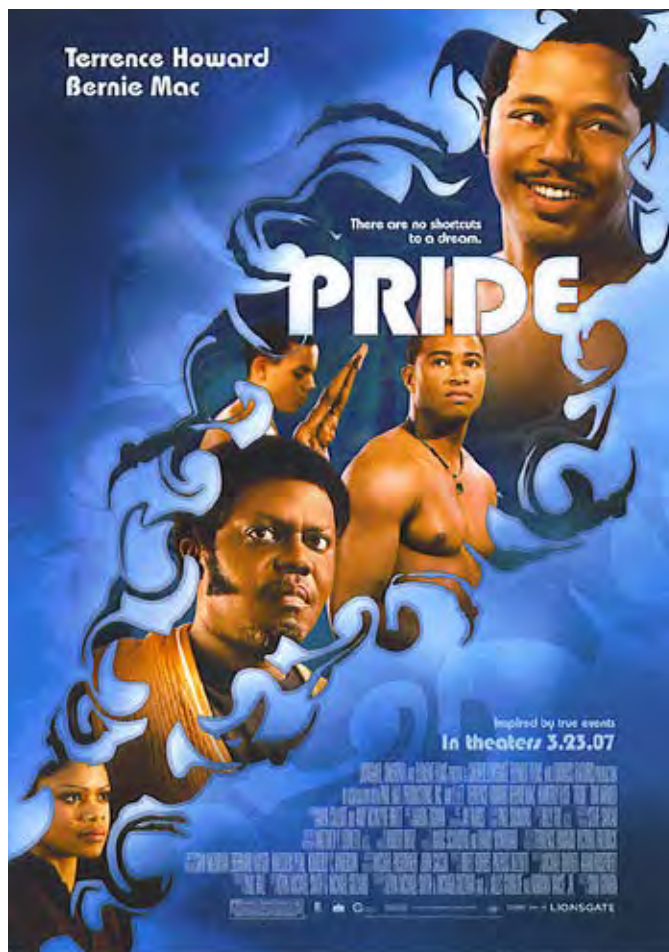
He studied how programs at top broadcast journalism schools like Syracuse, Missouri and Northwestern were structured and wanted to see how Pitt could differentiate itself. It has



Kevin displaying his love for Pittsburgh with his Terrible Towel at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California



Kevin filming his movie "Pride" on location in New Orleans, Louisiana, with producer Nicole Renna



The movie poster for Kevin's film "Pride" starring Academy Award nominee Terrence Howard and the late Bernie Mac

inherent advantages many of those other schools don't have, namely its location in the middle of a major city with a number of local television and radio stations along with three professional sports teams.

"Setting Pitt's program apart from the others was the number-one goal of the curriculum when I came in," Smith says. "I said this is what will separate us. This will put us above everybody else. Give me five to 10 years and we'll crush all those other places. Nobody will even be close. [And] that's what's happened."

Between the instruction they received in the program and their own personal determination, many of Smith's former students have excelled after leaving Pitt. Among the positions those pupils have accepted following their graduation are as a technical director for last year's World Cup in Qatar and this year's Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand; a coordinating producer for the ACC Network; and one of the heads of postproduction for "Dear Mama," an FX documentary series on the late rapper Tupac Shakur and his mother, Afeni.

Even in the program's infancy, Smith says that it has a level of talent comparable to Pitt football in the 1970s, and once its reputation grows, he thinks it's only going to get better.


"Usually, you get one of those [students you know is going to be a big success] every couple of years. We had three or four right away in the first class," Smith says. "They were able to transition quickly. It got the other students excited, like 'Oh shoot, they're already working professionally? This is the place to go.'"

Perhaps the clearest example of the work being done by students in Smith's television and news practicum course is found in a program called "Pitt to the Point," a one-hour news magazine show similar to "CBS Sunday Morning." On the show, which re-airs on KDKA's streaming platform on Saturdays, students have gotten the chance to interview newsmakers at the center of stories of national and international interest, from the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States to Gay Willis, a lead actress in "The Phantom of the Opera."

Student after student has told Smith that it's the most challenging course they've taken at Pitt but also the most rewarding. It has set them up well for life beyond Pitt, too, as Smith says that students from the class are going on job interviews just six weeks into the term.

"It [the television and news practicum course] challenges you in every phase," Smith says. "These kids are more experienced and more professional than people who have been in the industry for 20 years."


Through those hours of instruction and countless conversations outside class, Smith has gotten to enjoy one of the greatest benefits of teaching: the bond he has forged with his students. It's something that has made his time back at Pitt that much more gratifying.

"The best part is I get to take all the stuff that's happened to me and share it, not just with my [own] kid but with the students, who become my kids," he says. "I've got 130 of them now." 

Celebrating Sam Clancy

Written by E.J. Borghetti

Sam Clancy, one of the greatest athletes in Western Pennsylvania history, received multiple honors from the City of Pittsburgh with the declaration of June 24, 2023, as Sam Clancy Day and the unveiling of a street sign for Sam Clancy Way at the corner of Bedford Avenue and Roberts Street in Pittsburgh's historic Hill District.

Clancy was a four-year basketball starter at Pitt from 1977 to 1981, averaging 14.4 points and 11.6 rebounds per game. He is the only Pitt player to score more than 1,000 points (1,671) and grab more than 1,000 rebounds (1,362) in a career. He was drafted by two different professional sports leagues: the NBA's Phoenix Suns (1981) and the NFL's Seattle Seahawks (1982), the latter occurring even though he never played collegiate football. Clancy would play 10 NFL seasons, concluding his career with 227 tackles, 30 sacks and seven fumble recoveries. 



Pictured at left and above, Sam receives a proclamation from Pittsburgh City Council member Daniel Lavelle.



Sam being interviewed by WTAE-TV



Sam and his wife, Terri, pose with coworkers from Pitt Athletics.



Sam Clancy Way is located at the street corner of Clancy's childhood home



Sam gathers with current and former Pitt Athletics coworkers.



Sam with high school teammates Rodney Walker (left) and David "Puffy" Kennedy (right)



Sam poses with Roc (left) and one of his children, Samario Clancy.

Pitt's All-Time Home Run Leader Has Disrupted the Tire Industry



Career Records at Graduation:

- At-Bats (731)
- Hits (237)
- Runs (148)
- Home Runs (46)
- RBIs (198)
- Doubles (44)

Single-Season Records at Graduation:

- Hits (76)
- RBIs (66)

Senior Season Stats:

- Batting Average .369
- 18 home runs
- 43 runs scored

Awards:

- Senior of Distinction
- First Team All-Big East
- All-American

Current Career Records:

- Home Runs (46)
- Total Bases (428)
- RBIs (198)

Brad Rea started all four years during his Pitt baseball career and concluded his time as "the most prolific offensive performer in the history of the Panther program."



Brad Rea
Champtires President and Founder

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DARRELLE REVIS

Gives Pitt a Perfect 10 in Canton



Written by E.J. Borghetti



On a wintry Pittsburgh day in January 2007, Darrelle Revis walked into the Pitt football team meeting room and sat down in front of an audience packed with family, teammates, coaches, reporters and other well-wishers.



The 21-year-old had made a decision.

After three dazzling seasons at the University of Pittsburgh, Revis was considered a prime prospect for early entry into that year's NFL Draft. He had spent the prior months gathering information on his draft prospects, aided by his head coach, Dave Wannstedt, who had deep front office contacts in the league. Confident with the information he had received, it was finally time to share his decision with the rest of the world.

"I think I am ready for another chapter in my life," Revis said that day. "I am ready for it, and I am ready to fulfill another dream of mine."

The first dream, he said, was wearing Pitt's blue and gold.

"I am a hometown guy, and it has been a dream come true to be able to play for the University of Pittsburgh," he said. "Coming out of high school, I wanted to go to Pitt because of my uncle [former Pitt defensive lineman Sean Gilbert] and because I wanted to play for the hometown college football team. I could not have asked for a better place to go to school or play football. The people at the University have been tremendous, and I appreciate everyone who has helped me become a better player and person during my time at Pitt.

"My decision was a difficult one," he admitted. "It is difficult to say goodbye to my teammates and my coaches, but I am excited about the future and what it holds.

"I hope I can make the University of Pittsburgh proud."

Boy, did he ever.

Seventeen years after his final collegiate season, Revis' stature as one of the game's all-time greats was validated with



Darrelle Revis with his mother, Diana Askew

his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Revis was elected to the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility, formally receiving enshrinement on Aug. 5, 2023, at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton, Ohio.

It is difficult to project greatness. Many a first-round pick has fizzled in the NFL. But from the first time he put on a set of pads as a youth player back in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, Revis displayed the ability to play the game at a different level than his peers.

That was evident in the 2003 Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association Class AA Championship Game, when he scored five touchdowns—three rushing, one on an 89-yard punt return and another on a 69-yard blocked field goal return—to spark to a 32-27 victory over Northern Lehigh High School.



Revis receives his gold jacket at the Enshrinees' Gold Jacket Dinner on Aug. 5, 2023.



I am a hometown guy, and it has been a dream come true to be able to play for the University of Pittsburgh.

– Darrelle Revis



Then Head Football Coach Dave Wannstedt with Darrelle Revis at a press conference announcing Revis' intent to enter the 2007 NFL Draft.



Fellow Pitt Panther Tony Dorsett with Revis at his Hall of Fame induction

(There is an incredible footnote to this legendary state title game performance: Two days later, in his first basketball game of the year, Revis scored 35 points to lead the Quips to an 86–82 overtime victory over rival Beaver Falls High School.)

Revis was an instant-impact recruit for Pitt and then head coach Walt Harris in 2004. He earned Freshman All-America status while helping the Panthers to the Big East title and a Fiesta Bowl berth.

Over three collegiate seasons, he played in all 35 games and made 34 starts. Revis was a two-time first-team All-Big East cornerback who also shined as a punt returner. He scored five touchdowns at Pitt—three on interceptions and two via punt returns. Perhaps his most memorable collegiate play was a dazzling 73-yard punt return TD against West Virginia that was selected as ESPN's 2006 College Football Play of the Year.

Wannstedt, who coached Revis during the 2005 and 2006 seasons, had no hesitations about his star player leaving for the NFL. "He's the whole deal, the whole package. ... Somebody is going to get one heck of a cornerback in this spring's draft," he said at the time.

Still, a few skeptics of his pro potential remained. The biggest question in the scouting community was, "How fast can he run?"

Revis skipped working out at the NFL Combine due to a hamstring injury,

deciding instead to showcase his abilities a month later at Pitt's Pro Day in front of a visiting army of scouts.

As for those lingering speed questions, Revis provided the answers quickly—literally.

"Once the stopwatches clicked, it was like they [the NFL scouts] couldn't move fast enough to get on the phone and call their general managers," said one attendee.

One NFL Draft publication described Revis' workout as "spectacular."

A month later, Revis was again in front of a packed house—this time at his Aliquippa residence, where his draft party was held. Revis did not go to New York City for the NFL's glitzy draft extravaganza. He instead wanted to celebrate the biggest moment of his life to that point with family and friends.

Perhaps lost to history is the fact that Revis came very close to staying home to play for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

But instead of following in the footsteps of Mel Blount or Rod Woodson, Revis would take the path of another Beaver County, Pennsylvania, legend,

"Broadway Joe" Namath, and join the New York Jets, who traded up—one spot ahead of the Steelers—to take him with the 14th overall selection of the 2007 draft.

"I figured I'd be going to the Steelers," Revis said that day. "But the Jets jumped ahead of them and took me.

"I didn't know about it until the last second. I was looking at the TV and saw that Carolina was picking. Then, I saw the Jets made a trade. I respect them a lot for jumping up and picking me, for believing in me and my abilities."

Revis would reward the Jets' faith by becoming a first-day starter and ultimately would establish himself as one of the greatest cornerbacks in the history of the game.

Over 11 NFL seasons, he was a seven-time Pro Bowler and four-time first team All-Pro. He was selected to the NFL's 2010s All-Decade Team.

The man dubbed "Revis Island" compiled 29 career interceptions and returned three for touchdowns, including a 100-yarder against the Miami Dolphins in 2011. He compiled an astonishing 139 passes defended and recovered 12 fumbles.



Revis had a dazzling 73-yard punt return against West Virginia that was selected by ESPN as the 2006 College Football Play of the Year.




Revis played cornerback for the New York Jets for eight seasons (2007-12, 2015-16) and earned a spot on the 2007 PFWA All-Rookie Team.

In the 2014 season, he added Super Bowl champion to his resume as a lockdown corner for the New England Patriots, who defeated the Seattle Seahawks 28-24 in Super Bowl XLIX.

He played in 145 NFL games (142 starts) that covered tenures with the Jets (2007-12 and 2015-16), Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2013), Patriots (2014) and Kansas City Chiefs (2017).

Revis is the 10th former Panther to be elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, joining offensive tackle Jimbo Covert (2020), tight end Mike Ditka (1988), defensive end/linebacker Chris Doleman (2012), running back Tony Dorsett (1994), offensive lineman Russ Grimm (2010), linebacker Rickey Jackson (2010), quarterback Dan Marino (2005), running back Curtis Martin (2012) and linebacker Joe Schmidt (1973).

The standard he set at Pitt and in the NFL still resonates with the Panthers' current players, who walk past his image every day in the practice facility.

"When you say, 'shutdown corner,' you immediately think of Darrelle," says Pitt Head Coach Pat Narduzzi, who attended the enshrinement ceremonies in Canton. "I don't think anyone played the position better than him. He simply dominated opposing wide receivers, whether it was at Aliquippa, [at] Pitt or in the National Football League." 

PITT'S 10 PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAMERS RANK FOURTH AMONG ALL UNIVERSITIES.

1. Notre Dame (14)
Southern California (14)
3. Michigan (11)

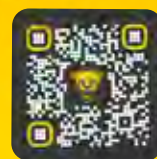
4.  (10)

- Ohio State (10)
6. Miami (Fla.) (9)
7. Alabama (8)
Syracuse (8)
9. Minnesota (7)
10. Illinois (6)





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The entire Pitt Basketball travel party visited Montjuïc Hill for a spectacular view of Barcelona and Font Màgica (Magic Fountain).

Las Panteras se unen en España (Panthers Unite in Spain)

Written by Matt Plizga

The Pitt Men's Basketball team, coaches and support staff travel party embarked on a trip to the Canary Islands and Barcelona, Spain, Aug. 5-14. The Panthers captured wins over the Tenerife All-Stars and the Sant Julia All-Stars while also enjoying the sites and culture of Spain. The 10-day trip began in Tenerife, the largest of the Canary Islands and the home of sophomore twins Guillermo and Jorge Diaz Graham, where the Panthers enjoyed time on the beach; a visit to the top-ranked water park in the world, Siam Park; and a trip to Mount Teide, the third-highest volcanic structure and the highest peak on the Canary Islands and in Spain. They also saw thousands of banana trees and learned that Tenerife produces all the bananas that are exported to Europe. While in Barcelona, the group toured the 1992 Olympic Village, Sagrada Familia and Park Güell and had time on their own to explore other popular sites like Spotify Camp Nou stadium, La Rambla, the Costa Brava beach and the Gothic Quarter. Not only was the trip incredibly educational, but it was also a transformative experience since the twins and Papa Amadou were the only student-athletes who traveled abroad before. 



Ishmael Leggett soars above the defense for two points during Pitt's win over the Tenerife All-Stars.



Zack Austin pushes the ball up the floor during a win over the Sant Julia All-Stars.



The Pitt Men's Basketball team poses outside Pavelló Olímpic de Badalona, host venue of the Dream Team's gold medal performance during the 1992 Olympics.



Jorge Diaz Graham and Guillermo Diaz Graham swapped t-shirts with a fellow countryman following the game with the Sant Julia All-Stars.



Team captain Blake Hinson presented Director of Athletics Heather Lyke and Head Coach Jeff Capel with their own jerseys as a thank you from the team for providing the team with the opportunity to visit the Canary Islands and Barcelona.



Blake Hinson (top) and Papa Amadou Kante (bottom) led a group of Panthers in an early morning beach workout in Tenerife.



The Panthers posed in front of Barcelona's most famous building, Sagrada Familia. The construction of the iconic Roman Catholic basilica was started in 1882 and is still being built today.



Jaland Lowe took a moment to play some futbol with a young tourist in Barcelona.



While in Tenerife, the Pitt travel party visited Teide National Park, home of the world's third-tallest volcanic structure as well as a rich and diverse assemblage of volcanic features and landscapes.



The Panthers and the Sant Julia All-Stars posed for a group picture prior to Pitt's victory over their hosts just outside Barcelona.



MISSI MATTHEWS: A Life and Career Built on a Love of Pitt and Sports

Written by Josh Rowntree

With the help of her alma mater, Missi Matthews has turned an early love of sports into a wildly successful career with one of the NFL's most beloved franchises.

The Plum Boro, Pennsylvania, native serves in a variety of multimedia roles for the Pittsburgh Steelers, primarily as a television and radio host and reporter.

And her roots are deeply tied to Pitt roots that began to grow nearly five decades ago.

Matthews' parents met at Pitt, where her father, Jeff, was an offensive lineman on the team that won a National Championship in 1976 under coach Johnny Majors.

A native of New Jersey, Jeff met Matthews' mother, Cindy, while in

school, and Matthews and her generation of the family have continued their love of the Panthers.

Matthews' brother, Zack, was on the men's soccer team at Pitt. Her cousin, Kirk Domanick, played baseball for the Panthers. Another cousin, Katelyn Allison (Fleishman), was a member of the Pitt track and field and cross country teams and is now an associate professor in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition, and serves as the interim director for the MS in Sports Science Program.





Above: Matthews doing sideline reporting for the Steelers Radio Network on 102.5 WDVE during the 2022 season (Photo credit: Karl Roser)

Top left: Matthews interviewing former Pitt QB Kenny Pickett after he was drafted by the Steelers in 2022 (Photo credit: Karl Roser)

Bottom left: NFL Draft coverage with Mike Prisuta, Steelers CB Joey Porter Jr. and Missi Matthews on set



And it doesn't stop there.

"When I tell you all of my aunts, uncles and cousins—pretty much everybody—went to Pitt, I mean everybody," Matthews says with a laugh. "Or, even if they didn't, we all still went to Pitt games. They were almost like family functions."

As a child, Matthews attended games at Pitt Stadium, including the last game ever played there, and at the Fitzgerald Field House, and her interest in attending the University grew. Her father pushed her to apply to a variety of schools, however—a due diligence move, she says, but one that still resulted in Matthews' coming to Oakland as a student in 2003.

She majored in media and professional communications and was a member of Pitt's dance team. She also became heavily involved in a variety of other sports behind the scenes.

"I knew I kind of wanted to do something in the communication field," she says. "I wasn't very specific when I first went to Pitt. Obviously, I love sports, [but] wasn't sure how to kind of intertwine them."

"I interned in Pitt's athletics department under E.J. [Borghetti] and Celeste [Welsh].

But I didn't really love the public relations aspect. And that's how I kind of jumped around and started working for [Associate Athletic Director for Broadcast and Video Production] Paul Barto."

At that time, Pitt was in the early stages of what is now its branch of the ACC Network and Pitt Studios, a multimedia production suite in the main lobby of the Pete.

"It was called PantherVision at the time. We were boots on the ground, starting with videos of us interviewing players."

One of Matthews' first interviews that she recalls was with former Pitt All-American linebacker H.B. Blades. And she was hooked.

"It was old school, just learning how to use a camera, how to edit, and it really just kind of opened my eyes to this part of sports that I didn't really think of," she says. "But it was definitely from PantherVision where something clicked and I thought, 'Oh, okay, this would be a cool job.'"

It didn't hurt that, in her first year at Pitt, Larry Fitzgerald took a run at the Heisman Trophy, compiling one of the most impressive seasons for a wide

receiver in college football history.

"I saw some pretty amazing games," Matthews adds.

That spark from PantherVision ignited a career for Matthews in the industry, even as a student. She interned at Fox SportsNet Pittsburgh (now AT&T SportsNet) and picked up work as an associate producer at WTAE-TV, working a shift from 3 a.m. until noon.

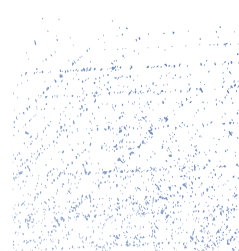
"Sometimes I'd get off a plane from a football game and go to work, which was fun," she jokes. "But it was a good experience."

The ability to get a taste of the sports journalism industry, observe other professionals at a young age as a student-athlete and get that hands-on experience at Pitt gave Matthews a path toward her future. It also showed her what she liked to do most and where to tailor her skill sets.

"I think it was definitely interviewing players, which I was very drawn to," she says. "But I was also learning how to pick up a camera, how to shoot, how to edit my own stuff, how to even do voiceovers. That was something very foreign to me."



Above: On the set of ESPN's College Gameday with Chris Fowler and fellow members of Pitt Dance Team



Center: Inside the UPMC Rooney Sports Complex with my brother (Zack Matthews) and late grandmother (Jean Matthews)



Right: On the field before Pitt vs. Syracuse (2022) with my dad (Jeff Matthews) and sons (Matthew & Justin)



"But Pitt is for sure where I think I got a really good crash course on what would come."

After graduating, Matthews found work at a couple of other Pennsylvania stations. She was a reporter and producer for WJAC-TV in Johnstown and WPMT FOX43 in Harrisburg before returning to Pittsburgh to work for WTAE again.

In 2012, a position opened up with the Pittsburgh Steelers as a team reporter—an in-house multimedia- and social media-based job that has become the norm throughout sports but was a bit groundbreaking at the time.

Since then, Matthews' career has flourished, and she has become a major part of the Steelers' media initiatives. She hosts a variety of filmed content and serves as a sideline reporter for the team's preseason games on television and as a radio sideline reporter for regular season and postseason games. In 2019, she was part of a group that won an Emmy Award for a roundtable segment featuring Super Bowl XLIII MVP Santonio Holmes.

Her professional accomplishments have come alongside some special personal moments. Matthews and her husband, Brad, have two sons. And the unusual nature of her job is always an interesting conversation starter with other parents.

"You meet a new parent at a sporting event, and they say, 'Oh, what do you do?'" she says. "It's a little different from when someone says, 'I work for so-and-so company.' Not many people go, 'I cover sports for a living.'"

While the uniqueness of her job has become normal for her, that's not the case for her sons.

"My kids see what I do, and they say, 'You talk to [Steelers defensive tackle] Cam Heyward, and he knows your name,'" she says. "And I say, 'Oh, yeah, he actually does.'"

"You don't think twice, but then my boys say, 'Oh, my gosh, tell him we said hi.' Stuff like that—I think it makes you realize that you don't have a normal job."

Matthews' days are now filled with conducting interviews; attending practices; and producing high-quality, award-winning-caliber content consumed by millions of fans each year. And the groundwork for that began at Pitt, where Pitt Studios' video production content has become among the best in the country and has resulted in plenty of talented young people going into the sports journalism workforce.

"I mean, I'm jealous as hell, I'll tell you that much," she says of the current amenities for Pitt students. "Just to see

their studio, the multiple control rooms, being able to be a student and having experience with the ACC Network—I would have killed for those opportunities.

"I thought interning for class credits at a local TV station or FSN Pittsburgh was the coolest thing ever. But, I mean, what they have now, that's major."

Matthews and her family maintain close ties to Pitt. She has done game-day work for the athletics department, and her father works as the "red hat" official on sidelines during Pitt football games, where Matthews' children love to watch their grandfather and the Panthers.

She also remains close with her former dance team teammates and even lives next door to one of her closest college friends, Danielle Petrina.

Matthews' friends, family and professional life are all connected, in a sense, by a love for Pitt that has very much been woven throughout the tapestry of her life. It's been there since the start. And now, with her growing family alongside, that love for sports and for the Panthers will be carried on.

"Sports have bonded us throughout my entire life, especially with Pitt," she says. "It's awesome." 🏈



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ADAM GUNN



AUSTIN RANSOM



Roomies, Teammates, Lifelong Friends

Written by Josh Rowntree



In September 2019, Adam Gunn was going through one of the most difficult moments of his life.

His mother, Dona, had just passed away at the age of 70. While family and friends made their way into the funeral home, one person walked through the doors that made Gunn freeze.

It was Austin Ransom, his former teammate, former roommate and coworker who was then living on the opposite side of the country.

"It was pretty crazy, pretty special," Gunn says while battling the emotions of the memory. "I didn't know he was coming because he was in California at the time. It was one of the toughest times I've ever had. For him to be there was pretty special and telling of the relationship we have."

Gunn and Ransom are brothers—not by blood, but by football.

Ransom grew up in Williamsville, New York, a small town just outside Buffalo with a population of a little more than 5,000.

Despite being a strong football player at Williamsville East High School, the offers to play major Division I football didn't come. So he decided to follow his older brother to the University of Pittsburgh in hopes of earning a high-quality education with his playing days behind him.

But the itch to get on the field remained, so he sent his high school game film to Associate Athletic Director for Football Administration Chris LaSala.

Pitt expressed interest, and Ransom went through numerous steps, including navigating a circuitous route to Pitt's South Side practice facility to turn in the necessary paperwork. There was only one problem.

"I'm an out-of-state freshman with no car," he explains. "I walked across the Hot Metal Bridge and down South Water Street and go in to get my physical, and they were like, 'Oh, you forgot to get this signature.'"

So Ransom turned around and made the trek back to Pitt's upper campus to get everything he needed.

It was an early glimpse of the tenacity and determination that would accompany him through his playing career and beyond.

Gunn, meanwhile, had a standout career at Kiski Area High School, playing alongside former Pitt All-American Scott McKillop.

He came to Pitt and redshirted in 2004 before becoming a special teams player the following two seasons. In 2007, his



Austin and Adam pose with their head coach, Dave Wannstedt, and teammates Scott McKillop, Eric Thatcher and Derek Kinder at graduation.

redshirt junior season, Gunn moved into the starting lineup as the team's strong side or "Sam" linebacker. He made 59 tackles that season, setting himself up for what had the makings of an impressive final season.

At the same time, Ransom was grinding away, moving from wide receiver to defensive back to linebacker, all while excelling as a special teams captain. Pitt's then head coach Dave Wannstedt was so impressed that he put Ransom on scholarship as a redshirt sophomore.

"It was a really cool experience for me," Ransom says of the moment Wannstedt broke the news. "My mom even cried. And it showed me that if you put your mind to something and work really hard, you can accomplish anything you want."

Along the way, Ransom and Gunn became close. They decided to live together as sophomores, bouncing around different houses and apartments in Oakland over the next few years.

"I was a walk-on, which is one of those lower roles on a football team," says Ransom. "But Adam was one of those guys who reached out, befriended me, would invite me to do things socially and helped me navigate the whole football process."

"Austin came in right after camp, so a lot of the friendships were established and you had your group of people," says Gunn. "But there was something about him. He just seemed like a good guy—someone who had energy and someone who you wanted to be around."

The typical college shenanigans followed. They took many of the same classes together as communication majors, got involved in Pitt's life skills program, both worked as bartenders at a South Side bar and shared mutual friends—including Gunn's future wife, Lindsay, who was a walk-on soccer player at Pitt and who was introduced to Gunn by Ransom after the two met during the walk-on student-athlete orientation.

The good times were bountiful for the two, without a doubt. But they also went through their share of trials, including those on the field.

In the 2008 season opener, starting weak side or "Will" linebacker Shane Murray was hurt and unable to play against Bowling Green. In stepped Ransom, flanking McKillop and Gunn.

Going from an offensive walk-on to a starter on defense was a remarkable achievement for Ransom, who had an interception early in the game. It was a dream come true for Gunn as well—at least initially.

"Our linebackers, it was Austin as the Will linebacker, then Scott McKillop—who I had played football with since we were 8 years old and in high school at Kiski—and then me at the Sam [linebacker]," Gunn says. "It was my roommate [and] another best friend in life, and we're all out there communicating and essentially running the defense."

"But it was only one short game, one short half." Early in the game, Gunn's season—and life—came to a screeching

halt. He and McKillop collided while trying to make a tackle. Gunn went down, injured. The diagnosis? A broken neck.

"I was very fortunate to have Lindsay and Austin there to support me," he says. "I needed that support to get through that tough time. I was taken away from the game that I loved and wasn't sure if I'd ever play football again." Thanks to his hard work and the help of Ransom and others, he did—and in a major way. Gunn made 77 tackles and had five sacks the following season.

"It was honestly amazing," he says. "All the preparation to get back ... to do that and get back on the field was extra special."

Ransom has several great recollections from his time at Pitt. Highlighting the list was a thrilling four-overtime win at Notre Dame—known now as the 'Sprinkler Game'—and being on the field for Darrelle Revis' breathtaking punt return touchdown against West Virginia in 2006.

And there is, of course, the obvious beloved win that they both share.

"Yeah, 13-9, no doubt," Gunn says bluntly, but with a smile, while thinking of Pitt's monumental upset victory over West Virginia in 2007. "It was absolutely amazing, the way that we played. Nothing went wrong."

"We kept them out of the National Championship game," adds Ransom. "People were throwing batteries at us coming out of there. My brother still tells stories of fans pouring hot chocolate on him. But it's a top-three favorite moment of mine, for sure."

Those football accomplishments, however, soon became memories, as they do for all players. And figuring out what they wanted to do in life became their next challenge.

Both went on to attend Pitt's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. Ransom got his master's in public and nonprofit management, and Gunn earned his in public administration.

Ransom then worked for Pitt for three years as the community relations coordinator for the Cathy and John Pelusi Family Life Skills Program.

"I was really close with former [Senior Associate Athletic Director for Student Life] Penny Semaia, and I was always one of the guys on the football team involved with community outreach," he says.

"I ended up just linking up with Penny while I was getting my master's, and he



The Gunn and Ransom families gather for a swim party.



The Gunn family: Adam; his wife, Lindsay; and their two children, Jazlyn, 9, and Jada, 6



The Ransom family: Austin; his wife, Brittany; and their three children: Cruz, 5; Lincoln, 3; and Zoey, 2

ended up hiring me full time."

Gunn went to work for Stryker, a multinational medical technology corporation. He started in sales and has worked his way up to director of marketing with the company.

Along the way, he reached out to Ransom, who joined him at Stryker in 2014 after working for Three Rivers Orthopedic & Spine Products, Inc.

Ransom moved to Northern California for the job and four years later accepted a position with Wright Medical Group N.V. He returned home three years ago to serve as a regional manager with Stryker's sports medicine division.

The two men remain close, both professionally and personally. Not only did they go on a summer golf trip to Las Vegas, Nevada, together this year, but they live just six houses away from one another in the Pittsburgh suburb of Wexford.

And as their jobs have grown, so have their families. Ransom and his wife, Brittany, are parents to Cruz, 5; Lincoln, 3; and Zoey.


Gunn and Lindsay—who also works at Stryker—have Jazlyn, 9, and Jada, 6.

From the kids who used to sling drinks on the South Side and chase down Steve Slaton and Pat White on the football field to coworkers in the medical technology world, Gunn and Ransom have always found a way to be side by side.

"Adam's an incredible guy," says Ransom. "I couldn't speak higher of anybody in this world. We just constantly push one another for success."

"Pitt really helped mold me, but I do have to give appreciation and credit to Adam for always having my back and bringing cool opportunities to me and my family. I owe so much of my life and the success of my life to him."

And Gunn, who broke down in tears when Ransom walked into that funeral home four years ago, certainly shares those warm feelings toward his friend.

"There's not anything that I wouldn't do for Austin," he says. "And clearly that's the same for him." 

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Pictured from left to right are Pitt's Assistant Director of Strategic Initiatives Aysha Muhammad, Pitt Football Student-Athlete David Green and former Compliance Coordinator Sterlyn Austin from Loyola Marymount.

Written by Aysha Muhammad

Black Student-Athlete Summit: Connecting Athletic Success with Real-World Career Opportunities

The Black Student-Athlete Summit is an annual three-day event that brings together student-athletes, administrators, coaches and faculty members. The 2023 summit took place May 21-24 in Los Angeles, California, on the campus of USC. Attendees from the University of Pittsburgh were Assistant Director of Strategic Initiatives Aysha Muhammad and football student-athlete David Green. The Black Student-Athlete Summit exists to empower, educate and inspire Black student-athletes and staff members while creating opportunities and initiatives to support the work of Black student-athletes outside competition.

The goal of the summit is to provide a space for Black student-athletes and faculty to embrace their Blackness and be themselves while connecting with other student-athletes from all over the country. Each student-athlete was encouraged to leave the summit with proven ways to impact their campuses for social impact. In addition, student-athletes had the opportunity to connect with a wide range of professionals in the world of college athletics who were able to discuss many different career opportunities. Student-athletes were pushed to engage in vigorous discussions that affect Black student-athletes and learned how to leverage their athletic ability for long-term success in different career industries. While at the summit, student-athletes had the opportunity to participate in multiple career preparation opportunities, such as the Career Combine and Pro Day.

Student-athletes and staff heard from a wide variety of speakers, ranging from mental health professionals to former NBA stars who are doing transformative work with Black student-athletes and in the Black community. Staff members were encouraged to engage in tough conversations around the most pressing issues affecting Black student-athletes and professionals. Staff left the summit with strategies designed to help Black student-athletes excel both in their playing arena and in the classroom. Finally, staff and student-athletes were given tools to learn how to maximize their influence within their respective teams, communities and athletic departments. 📍

“

Getting to interact with more than 1,000 student-athletes from 160 different colleges and universities and having the chance to pick their brains about networking and team goals that they have for their upcoming seasons was truly amazing. We also listened to successful influencers elaborating on how they got into their profession doing something that they are passionate about. They taught us about the elevator pitch, time management, understanding different work environments and so much more. A big life lesson they expressed was to step outside of your comfort zone and be open-minded to the world.”

—Pitt Football Student-Athlete David Green



The opening session, titled The Mindful Athlete: Secrets to Pure Performance, featured mindfulness speaker Brandon "Soul Cole" Coleman.



A session titled All the Smoke featured retired NBA player Matt Barnes and summit moderator Bobby Thompson from Loyola Marymount.

VARSITY LETTER CLUB:

JULIANA VAZQUEZ

Juliana Vazquez is a Pitt women's soccer Forever Panther who was the first woman in her family to graduate college and the first player under Head Coach Randy Waldrum to sign a contract to play professional soccer. After retiring from the sport in 2021, she was asked to return to her alma mater to teach a graduate course at the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

What degrees did you earn at the University of Pittsburgh, and when did you graduate?

I earned a Bachelor of Science in health information management in 2019 and a Master of Science in health informatics in 2020.

What made you want to come to Pitt?

I grew up coming to campus watching my older brother, Boo Vazquez, play baseball for Pitt (2011-15). I loved the campus, the energy, the city and the people and could easily envision myself as a Pitt student-athlete. I knew the women's soccer program was a major work in progress when I committed, and that was one of the most attractive things about it. If you ask anyone who knows me, they will tell you I love a challenge. I did not want to be just another athlete at a school that already had a history of success and a consistently winning program. I didn't want my time to be transactional, like clocking in and out of a 9-5 job. I wanted my time to be meaningful. I wanted to make a lasting impact and help build the foundation of a successful program. I wanted my hard work, sweat and tears to be the seeds that sprouted, grew and gave life to a successful program when I was gone.



Describe your experience as a Pitt student-athlete.

My time at Pitt was transformative. I was very blessed to have been surrounded by incredible people who challenged me, inspired me and supported me. I achieved so much more than I realized I was capable of thanks to these people. I learned how to be a leader, a winner and a loser. I learned the importance of community, accountability and compromise. I learned how to love and accept myself for all that I am and all that I am not. I learned to respect and value what makes each individual uniquely different. Looking back now, I am so proud of the young lady who welcomed every challenge, maintained her morals and values and walked out of Pitt a better person. I will carry my experience and these life lessons with me for the rest of my life.

What was your favorite thing to do on campus?

I loved my sport and preparing to be the best I could be. My favorite thing to do was go out to the field and train on my own when no one was watching. I wasn't the fastest or the strongest, and that was out of my control. But I made sure that I was the hardest worker and homed in on my strengths. I was constantly working my technical and tactical game. I made sure I was one of the fittest players on the field. I knew I wouldn't be able to out-sprint someone, but I made sure that I could outlast just about everyone.

What is something that you wish you could tell your younger self?

The obstacle in the path is not separate from the path, it is the path—meaning everything you face in life happens for you, not to you. You are exactly where you are meant to be, facing exactly what you need in order to become the person you are destined to be. We do not fail, we fall. Perfection isn't a lack of falling; it is refusing to stay down. As long as we stand up, we are winning.

What experiences helped to prepare you for life after college?

Simply put, the daily adversity I experienced as a Division I college athlete prepared me for life after college. Being a student-athlete is a full-time commitment. I had 6 a.m. lift, recovery/fueling, then class work all day, training 3-5 p.m. and then night class. I learned how to become a master of time management, compromise and preparation out of necessity. I often think back to those times and wonder, "How did I do that?" I then come back to the present moment and realize I am doing all the same things, just in a slightly different context. So it is very obvious that those skills continue to serve me well.



Vazquez playing at Ambrose Urbanic Field for Pitt Women's Soccer



Vazquez competing for Puerto Rico Sol FC



Vazquez at La Gran Fina with the winning competition trophy

What is your most memorable moment at Pitt?

It was scoring the first goal against Boston College in 2019 that led us to the first ACC win in several years. I was not a goal scorer. I was the player who would cover more than 9 miles a game and maintain a flow on the field. I was not very flashy or memorable. I kept the ball moving and established possession. When a player like me gets a goal, it's a big deal, because it doesn't happen often. For me to get one in such a pivotal game in program history was one of my most memorable moments at Pitt.

What was the transition like from collegiate to professional athletics?

You get pampered in Division I collegiate soccer. You have so many resources at your fingertips: fueling stations, laundry services, genius strength coaches, top-line facilities, tutors, etc. There are people all around you to hold you accountable and make sure you are doing the things you need to do to be successful on and off the field. When you shift to professional, there is no more hand-holding. This is a job, and professional sport is a business. You and only you are responsible for holding yourself accountable. If you don't, then you will lose your job. However, once you come to that realization, the transition feels easier. You will maintain most of the day-to-day activities: train, recover, film, compete, all on repeat.

What is it like being back and working at your alma mater?

I feel grateful that my academic presence made such an impact that I was asked back to teach a graduate course called Revenue Cycle Analytics in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. I never imagined that this would be in the cards for me. I doubted myself and still

feel unqualified sometimes. But I try not to make decisions based in fear. So, I asked myself, "Would you regret not trying?" I would, so I accepted the offer and have loved the experience so far!

What one piece of advice would you give to current student-athletes?

Take advantage of every opportunity and resource Pitt has to offer. The Cathy & John Pelusi Family Life Skills Program does an amazing job of providing pertinent and practical opportunities that directly translate to life after college. I know it feels like forever when you are in the college bubble, but it truly flies by. Do everything you can to be prepared for life after college. I see college as either a springboard that launches you to new heights or mud that slows you down for the rest of your life. It is up to you!

Describe what being a Forever Panther means to you.

Being a Forever Panther means that no matter where I go, what I do or how far I have been gone, I always have a home, family and love with and for the people at Pitt. 🐾



Vazquez playing at Ambrose Urbanic Field for Pitt against Loyola Marymount on Aug. 23, 2019

(At left) Vazquez at the Puerto Rican National Team Camp in February 2021

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PITT MEMORIES

Bill Hillgrove assumed the duties of play-by-play broadcaster for Pitt football for the 1974 season. This fall commemorates his 50th season in that role.



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