

STEVE SLOAN OBITUARY

Steve Sloan, legendary University of Alabama All-American quarterback, college football coach and athletic director, passed away peacefully on Sunday afternoon, April 14, 2024 in Orlando, Florida at the Orlando Health Phillips Hospital with his loving wife Brenda by his side. Steve had been in memory care for the past three months. He was 79.

Born Stephen Charles Sloan on August 19, 1944 in Austin, Texas, he was preceded in death by his son Jonathan, parents C.L. "Preacher" and Virginia Byrd Sloan and step-mother Samye Jean Phillips Sloan. He is survived by his loving wife Brenda Faw Sloan, his high school sweetheart of 55 years and son Stephen, Jr. of Lima Peru. Steve's father served in the U.S. Air Force and settled in Cleveland, Tennessee in 1953. At Bradley Central High School, Steve was all-state both as a quarterback and guard on the football and basketball teams, winning state championships in both sports his senior year. He was also one of the top prep golfers in the state.

Even with Joe Namath as a freshman at Alabama, Steve accepted the challenge and chose to play for the legendary Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant and the Alabama Crimson Tide. As a sophomore, he played behind Namath and played in most games as a defensive back. He filled in for suspended Namath in the Sugar Bowl game against Mississippi for a thrilling 12-7

victory completing a 9-2 season. When Namath was injured in Steve's junior season, Steve backed him up as Alabama won the 1964 national championship with a 10-1 season. As a senior, Steve led Alabama to the 1965 national championship defeating Nebraska 39-28 in the 1966 Orange Bowl and was selected Most Valuable Player. Alabama posted a 9-1-1 record and Steve was consensus All-American, was named MVP in the Southeastern Conference and won the Sammy Baugh Trophy as the nation's best passer. He and his college roommate, All-American center-linebacker Paul Crane, were voted Co-Captains by the 1965 team.

While at Alabama, Steve was one of the most popular student-athletes in Crimson Tide history. An outspoken Christian, he received hundreds and hundreds of invitations to speak to youth and church worship services across Alabama and beyond. In September 1964, he was a founding member of the Alabama Fellowship of Christian Athletes and 60 years later, it is the longest running college FCA huddle in America. Steve considered this one of his fondest privileges and he became one of FCA's greatest role models as a Christian coach. He was an outstanding speaker and was in great demand throughout his career.

Evangelist Billy Graham preached in Denny Stadium on April 26, 1965 and Steve was called on to give the Scripture reading. Mr. Graham invited him to share his Christian testimony at his

March, 1966 Greenville, South Carolina Crusade and Coach Bryant secured the University plane for Steve and three FCA teammates to make the appearance.

Even with heavy demands on and off the football field, Steve still excelled in the classroom and was Academic All-American in 1964 and 1965 majoring in business and education. He was the model student-athlete of the highest degree.

Steve was drafted by the Atlanta Falcons and played as a back-up for two years. He returned to his alma mater as a member of Coach Bryant's staff in 1968-70 and as golf coach in 1969. Then, for the next two years, he was offensive coordinator at Florida State and the Seminoles led the nation in offense. He moved next to Georgia Tech as offensive coordinator before taking his first head coaching job at Vanderbilt University in 1973. He was hired at age 27, thus becoming the youngest college head football coach in the nation. His team finished 7-3-1 in 1974 and played in the school's first bowl game since 1955. Steve was named Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year.

By now, Steve became one of the most sought after head coaches in the nation, and he took the Texas Tech job and compiled a 23-12 record over three years (1975-77). He was named Southwest Conference Coach of the Year in 1976 finishing as Co-Conference Champions with Houston and ranked 13th in the nation. It was Texas Tech's first conference

championship. Then the Ole Miss Rebels came calling and Steve took five of his assistants with him. His defensive coordinator, Bill Parcells, took the Air Force Academy head coaching job, and became a highly successful NFL coach, winning two Super Bowl titles with the New York Giants. Also, on Steve's staff was Coach Romeo Crennel who would later become head coach of the Cleveland Browns. Steve was the Rebels head coach from 1978-1982 compiling a 20-34-1 record. He then became head coach at Duke University from 1983-86 and finished his coaching career with a 13-31 record with the Blue Devils.

When his former Alabama teammate Ray Perkins moved on from Alabama to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Steve returned to Tuscaloosa as Athletic Director in 1987. Of his many accomplishments in his first administrative role, Steve gave leadership to the launch of TIDE PRIDE, which became the most successful football donor program in the nation, and still provides the primary financial resource for the Alabama athletic program today.

During his Alabama tenure, Bryant-Denny Stadium was expanded on the upper deck east side in 1988, raising the seating capacity to 70,123. It included a new Press Box, Ivory Club and President's Box. The Crimson Tide football team played in the Sugar Bowl, the basketball team gained two berths in the NCAA Tournament and the gymnastics team

became national champions, to name some of the Crimson Tide's achievements during his years as Athletic Director.

Steve went on to have very successful stints as Athletic Director at North Texas State University where he took the football program to Division I status from 1990-92. Then he took the same post at the University of Central Florida for the next 9 years (1993-2002) where he elevated the football program to Division I status. He led the Golden Knights to 36 Atlantic Sun Conference championships and 26 NCAA tournament berths. He returned home to the University of Chattanooga as Athletic Director for the next four years (2002-2006) moving that athletic program into a new era of athletic achievements nationally.

In 2000, Steve was inducted into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, and was selected as one of the top athletes of the Century from the state of Tennessee by Sports Illustrated. Then in 2003, the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame inducted Steve giving him this rare honor from his two favorite states, Tennessee and Alabama. In 1995, Steve fulfilled a lifelong dream of qualifying for a major golf championship. He qualified and played in the U.S. Senior Open at The Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland. It was a testament to his reputation as a scratch golfer. In 1980, Steve was selected one of America's 10 Most Outstanding Young Men by the United States Chamber of Commerce.

One of his most cherished honors came in 2019 when he was selected for the Paul W. Bryant Alumni-Athletic Award. It recognizes former lettermen whose accomplishments since leaving the University of Alabama are outstanding. Selection is based on character, contributions to Society, Professional Achievement and Service to Fellow Man. Furthermore, Steve and Coach Bryant had a special bond and relationship that began during his playing days and lasted until Coach Bryant's passing in 1983.

Steve was the author of two books, *Calling Life's Signals* in 1966 and *A Whole New Ballgame* in 1975. Both are based on his Christian faith and how he used his platform in football to serve Jesus Christ. Steve also served his country in the Air Force Air National Guard from 1966-72.

Upon his retirement in 2006, he and Brenda, whom he married on May 12, 1968 in Atlanta, made Orlando their home. In the last many years, Steve had devoted himself to Brenda with her health issues. His loving and sacrificial care for her has been admired by all who know Steve. Tommy and Marcia Limbaugh, who spent many years on staff with Steve, have maintained a close relationship and have been a great source of support to Steve and Brenda during their retirement years.

Steve was a gifted athlete, he dearly loved coaching young men, he was an outstanding administrator, a committed Christian, always the perfect gentleman, and most would tell you that he was one of the finest persons they had ever known. He had an infectious smile, he loved people, was never critical and always complimentary. He had a sign in his office that said, "There are no ordinary people." He treated everyone with great respect, worth, honor and dignity.

Many times, Steve would sign his autograph with Matthew 5:16..."Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." Steve epitomized that verse being unashamed and unafraid of his deep Christian convictions. And now, he has this promise from Revelation 14:13..."Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from all their toils and trials, for their good deeds follow them."

Funeral arrangements for Steve will be announced later.

For the Media's information this obituary was written by Wayne Atcheson, former Sports Information Director at the University of Alabama, and close personal friend of Steve.

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