

WHERE TO

A resource dedicated to student-athletes and their Life after Notre Dame.



DECEMBER 2023

WHERE I'VE LANDED: REINFORCING LOVE, TRUST AND COMMITMENT

By Reggie Brooks, ND'93



In spring 1989, I was lost on the Notre Dame campus. Mind you, I had been there many times before with my parents to watch my brother Tony play for Coach Lou Holtz and the Fighting Irish. It had struck me then how much the university felt like a small community, not the huge city college I had imagined as a kid in north Tulsa.

On this day, I was a recruit as Tony had been. I wasn't seen as his offshoot, even though he was Oklahoma's number one high school player and just the year before had helped the Irish win the national championship. No, Notre Dame recruited me pretty hard, and I was grateful, considering I missed my senior year at Booker T. Washington High School due to injury.

I was wandering around because my previous trips to Notre Dame never took me to the inner campus, just Tony's dorm or the stadium. And unlike then, when I could easily spot Tony on the field, this day he was nowhere to be seen. Some recruiting host he was, tasked with escorting me to meetings. So, I was freaking out because if you know anything about Coach Holtz, you know that if you're on time, you're late.



It was a groundskeeper who set me on the right path to my destination. From my perspective, he had no vested interest in getting me anywhere; he had a busy and important job to do, keeping those campus greens and flower beds immaculate. But with his gracious gesture, he let me know I was indeed part of a community now – one that cares, especially when you need help.

This caring approach became a recurring theme during my college and NFL experiences. The Notre Dame community was there for me when I struggled, and not because I played sports, but because I'm a human being. In turn, during my time as the university's Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Alumni Relations/Engagement, I began to notice that former players were coming back and asking for help. At first, these were guys from as far back as the 1960s and 70s. Then, I started to hear from younger student-athletes about their own difficulties.

These athletes are facing challenges unique to our time, as every move they make, mistake or otherwise, is visible to the world. They're so frightened to do anything wrong because there's a good chance it'll be blown out of proportion. That's why I always try to extend grace to this next generation – you're only human, and you have a support system in us.

I never imagined I would end up where I am today, directing Holtz's Heroes Foundation, but I'm honored to play a part in helping these individuals and, by extension, their spouses, children, parents, siblings, and fellow alumni who feel the impact of their struggles deeply.

Holtz's Heroes is aligning with Project LAND now, and we're excited about the way our two organizations complement each other, with LAND broadening the scope of support to former student-athletes of all 26 varsity teams. To those who need help I say, tap into this community. Although it may be hard to do so, reach out, and the LAND team will reach back to you. They won't leave you lost. Instead, they'll connect you to alumni or professional services that will set you on the path to your destination, be it improved mental or physical health, a fulfilling new career, or like that groundskeeper did for me over three decades ago, your true calling.

Reggie Brooks (ND'93) is Executive Director of Holtz's Heroes Foundation, which maintains Coach Lou Holtz's and his teams' legacy of "Love, Trust, and Commitment" by assisting former student-athletes facing financial, physical, or mental hardships, providing scholarship aid to deserving youth, and serving communities through charitable works. Born and raised in north Tulsa, Oklahoma, Reggie joined the Fighting Irish in 1989 and over four years amassed 1,508 yards and scored 15 touchdowns, including the famous "Unconscious" one, and pulling off the game-winning 2-point conversion at the "Snow Bowl." The All-American was a Heisman Trophy finalist in 1992 and a second-round draft pick by Washington in 1993. Reggie rushed 1,063 yards in his rookie year and retired in 1996 after a year with Tampa Bay and 1,726 career yards. Before his role with Holtz's Heroes, Reggie was Notre Dame's Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Alumni Relations/Engagement and a member of the Fighting Irish Digital Media team. In 2021, he published *If These Walls Could Talk: Stories from the Notre Dame Fighting Irish Sideline, Locker Room, and Press Box* with Senior Associate Athletics Director John Heisler. Reggie and wife Christina, his college sweetheart, have five children and live in Fort Worth, Texas.