

TRUE BLUE



Former football standout, Thomas Madigan, '98, stays in the game when it comes to supporting his alma mater.

By Natalie Missakian



When Thomas Madigan, '98,

was a kid, he dreamed of attending a big Division I-A football school like Michigan or Notre Dame. A Massachusetts native, he had never heard of Southern or the Owls. But today he is one of the team's biggest fans and supporters.

Madigan says he fell in love with Southern the first time he visited campus during a high school recruiting trip.

"The whole [football] team from freshman up to seniors welcomes you with open arms. Everybody is family from the moment you walk in the door," Madigan says.

When an offer of nearly a full scholarship followed, Madigan made the decision to commit to Southern in the fall. He didn't change his mind, even when several other New England schools tried to recruit him after he had made his decision.

"I'm a pretty loyal person. If I tell someone I'm doing something, I'm doing it," says the former four-year starter, who grew up in Lowell, Mass. "It was actually the best decision I ever made."

The boy who grew up in a third-floor city apartment now manages the finances of high-net-worth clients, including some

well-known professional athletes and coaches (he can't name names), as vice president, investments, for UBS Financial Services Inc. He is managing partner in the Lelas/Madigan/Curtis Wealth Management Group at UBS, which manages about half a billion dollars in pension plans, 401K plans, and corporate assets.

While his business management degree from Southern opened the door to his career in the financial world, Madigan, 36, credits the football program with developing the values and work ethic he needed for success.

"Most successful people in this world had some sort of athletics background or have been part of a team," Madigan says. "It brings out that camaraderie and knowing what it takes to get things done. You learn to step things up so you don't disappoint anyone else."

It made sense that when he reached the point in his life where he could give back to the university, he chose to focus on athletics. "Football is near and dear to my heart," he explains. "I wouldn't have gone to college if it wasn't for football."

Madigan lives nearby in Branford, Conn., and can often be seen cheering on the Owls during home games. He is just as vocal when it comes to convincing friends to support the team financially.

“I don’t mind calling people up and telling people what I give,” says Madigan, who serves on the SCSU Foundation Board of Directors. “I know not everybody has the means. But there are people who I’ve known for 20 years now who do very well financially. . . . A lot of them have been very generous.”

Seven years ago, he and fellow alumnus, Kenneth Steiner, ’97, started the Big Blue Crew, a group of former Southern football players and their wives who present a check each year at Homecoming to the university.

Madigan says a strong athletics program benefits the entire Southern community. “The more success a team has, the more revenue it’s going to generate for the whole school,” Madigan explains. “When the women’s basketball team won the [2007 Division II NCAA] national championship, that brought huge publicity to the school.”

As for those dreams of attending a big-name football school? Madigan has no regrets.

He says he enjoyed the diversity of an urban campus. Southern is also where Madigan met his wife, Michelle Campise Madigan, ’97, a teacher at Troup Magnet School in New Haven. The couple is expecting their first child in October.

He also formed priceless friendships with his teammates that continue to this day. “Here it is almost 15 years out and I still talk to these guys a few times a month,” says Madigan. ■

TEAM PLAYERS



What started out as a reunion and tailgate party among old college friends has turned into a financial boost for Southern’s football program.

The brainchild of Southern alumni, Thomas Madigan, ’98 and, Kenneth Steiner, ’97, the Big Blue Crew raised \$13,265 for the football program last year.

The group, made up of former Southern football players and their wives, presented the money to Head Football Coach Rich Cavanaugh at last year’s Homecoming celebration.

“We actually started it with four or five guys sitting on a cooler in the parking lot,” recalls Steiner, of the group’s early days some seven years ago.

The first year, Madigan and Steiner contacted some old teammates to plan a get-together at Homecoming. Steiner had the idea to make a banner and allow former Owls’ teammates to sign their names in exchange for a donation.

With the help of social media and through word of mouth, the endeavor grew. The banner now boasts about 200 signatures, some from alumni who live a plane ride away.

“We’ve gone from initially raising a few hundred dollars to raising over \$13,000. Hopefully that will go up every year,” says Madigan.

While a donation is not required to attend, most people give something, either by buying raffle tickets, writing a check, or filling out a donation card through the Alumni Association, says Steiner.

Madigan says the group’s long-term goal is to raise enough money to set up an endowed scholarship.



Meet the Big Blue Crew: former football players and their families who are committed to supporting Southern.