

Roger Staubach

ACG interviews “Captain Comeback” on the eve of Super Bowl XLV.

BY JOHN INGOLDSBY

For the past half-century, two American institutions have graced our sports landscape, and this February they join forces when Roger Staubach presides over Super Bowl XLV. Long before Staubach was “Captain Comeback” leading America’s Team – the Dallas Cowboys – to two Super Bowl championships, he was a household name as “Roger the Dodger” winning the Heisman Trophy with another of America’s teams, the one at the U.S. Naval Academy. Between these two distinct football careers, he willingly fulfilled his military obligation by serving in Vietnam, and when his playing days ended, he founded an ultra-successful real estate company. The NFL Hall of Famer recently sat down in Dallas with ACG correspondent John Ingoldsby to discuss his amazing life.

ACG How does it feel to be the chairman of the North Texas Super Bowl XLV Host Committee?

STAUBACH: Well, it was a bit of a surprise. Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones called a few years ago and asked me to come by his house, where he said, “We are going to be bidding on the Super Bowl, and we want you to be the face of the bid committee.” Then we made a presentation to the owners, and I continued on as chairman of the North Texas Super Bowl XLV Host Committee.

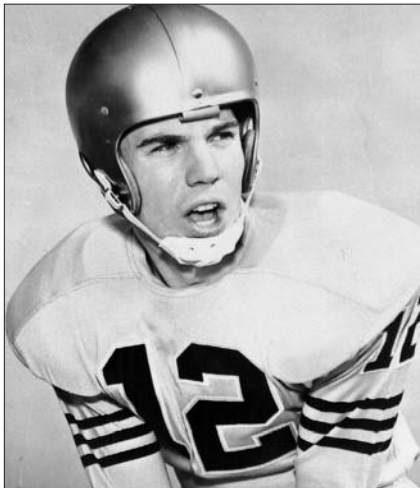
ACG Do you expect the February 6, 2011, game at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas, to be the biggest Super Bowl ever?

STAUBACH: North Texas is football country and easy to get to logistically. The new stadium is *the* premier people-friendly facility, and our goal is to put on the finest Super Bowl the NFL has ever had.

ACG What leadership lessons learned in the Navy are most useful to you in your role as chairman of the Super Bowl Host Committee?



1965. Roger Staubach talks with his mother and father at his Naval Academy graduation. Although he was a 10th-round pick in the 1964 NFL draft, Staubach opted to fulfill his military commitment and served as a naval supply and logistics officer in Vietnam before beginning his pro football career in 1969.



During his time as quarterback at the U.S. Naval Academy, Staubach set a Navy record with 4,253 yards in total offense. In 1963, he won the Heisman Trophy and the Maxwell Award while leading Navy to the National Championship Game, where his team lost to the University of Texas.

STAUBACH: The first thing is that you have to work hard in life to achieve anything. The old saying is that it takes a lot of spectacular preparation to get spectacular results. At the Naval Academy, we were educated well but also had a lot of responsibility. In Vietnam, I was the logistics and supply officer. Teamwork is not people falling into step, but rather people truly caring about someone other than themselves. In the military, you are watching the back of your brethren all the time. The other part you learn is perseverance, where you cannot quit.

ACG What lessons have you learned as a successful real estate executive that you now apply as chairman?

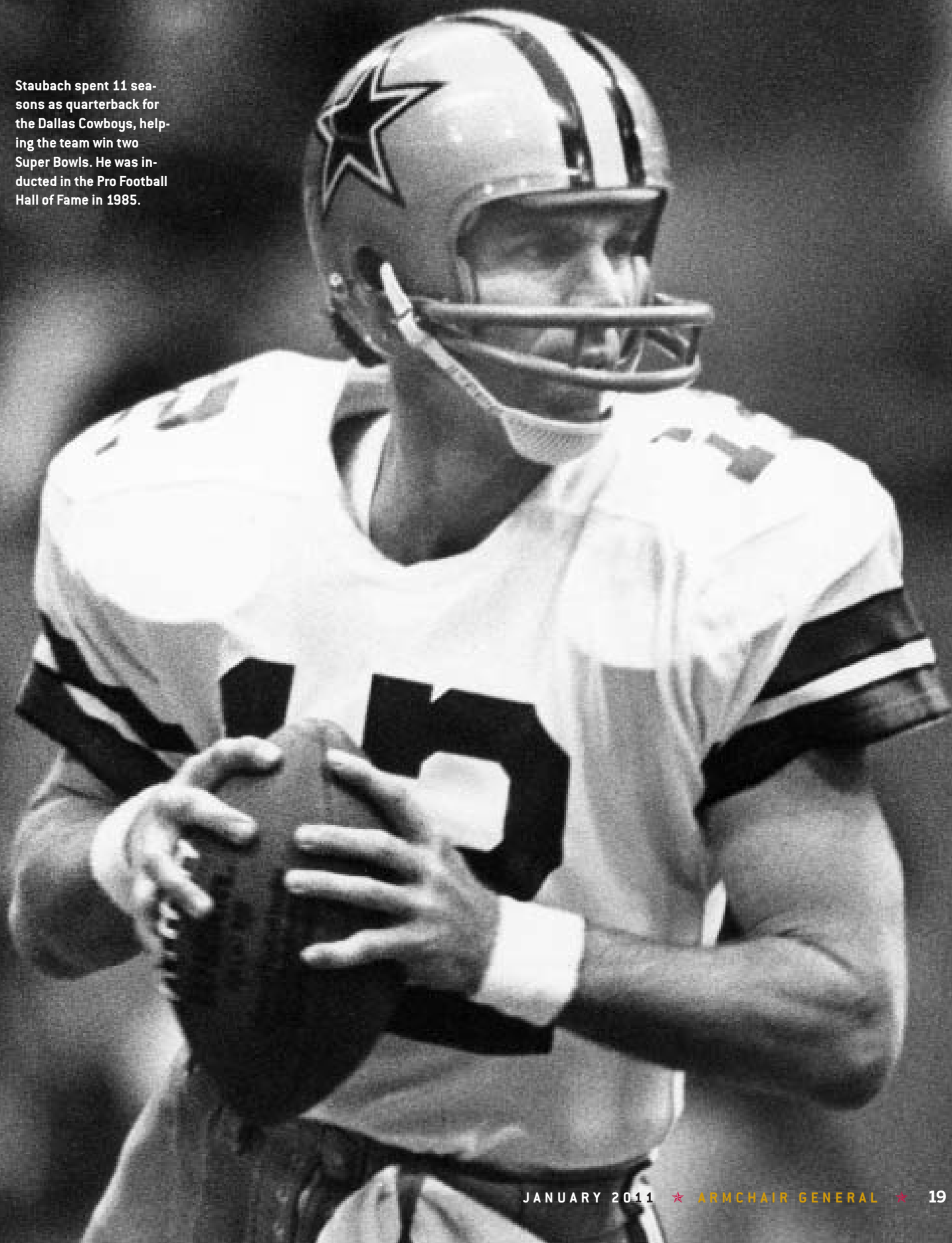
STAUBACH: First of all, you must have the right people in the right places doing the right things, and miracles can happen for your business. But you also have to get your priorities in line, and be committed to the customers.

ACG What is your fondest memory of the legendary 1963 Navy team when you won the Heisman Trophy?

STAUBACH: It was a special year for us. We started by losing on a Friday night to SMU 32-28, but then we played well the whole year. And the Army-Navy game that year was extra-special because, obviously, President Kennedy was assassinated, and the game was called off, and then it was rescheduled. It turned out to be a heck of a football game. In fact, we were ahead 21-7 in the second half, and never got the ball back, but Army had used up their timeouts and ended up on our 2-yard line [Navy won, 21-15]. The game itself was electric because everybody just let it all hang out, and it was one of the most exciting games I have ever played in because of the atmosphere of Kennedy and that he was there the year before as commander-in-chief. So the season had that highlight as far as winning that game, and also beating Notre Dame. But we had the big disappoint-

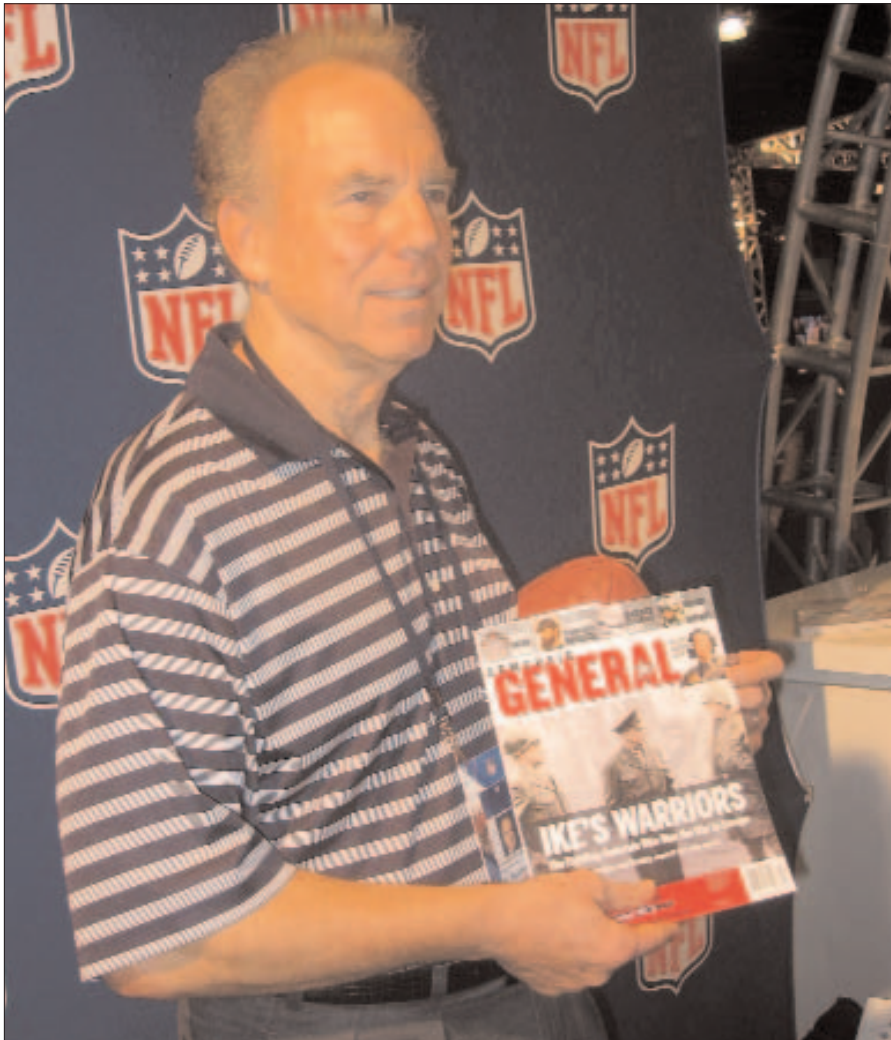
BOTH IMAGES COURTESY U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY

Staubach spent 11 seasons as quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, helping the team win two Super Bowls. He was inducted in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1985.



COURTESY, DALLAS COWBOYS

“After the game, a reporter asked, ‘What were you thinking about when you threw the ball?’ I said, ‘I closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary.’ That was the first time the phrase was ever used in the NFL.”



February 2010. Staubach holds a copy of the May 2009 issue of *Armchair General* at a ceremony during last year's Super Bowl Week in South Florida.

ment of losing to Texas in the Cotton Bowl, which was a rough loss, although we were still the number two team in the country. It was one of the most fun years I have ever had, but if we had beaten Texas, it would have been an even better year.

ACG When you graduated from Annapolis, you had the opportunity to play pro football with the Dallas Cowboys, yet you chose to fulfill your military obligation and go to Vietnam. How did that all play out?

STAUBACH: After my junior year, when I had a really good year, I was drafted because I was at New Mexico in prep school for one year. Gil Brandt, who was with the Cowboys,

came to see my mother in Cincinnati and insinuated to her that I should get out of the Navy and have a big contract with the Cowboys. She threw him out of the house – not physically though. I was an only child, and we had high principles, so it was not even a thought, and I would never have considered doing something like that.

ACG What are your strongest memories from your service as a logistics officer in Vietnam?

STAUBACH: The strongest memories are just of the courage of the Marines that I was supporting there. They were fighting in the northern sector of South Vietnam on the

South China Sea, and I was in the rear in charge of all the shipping and receiving of ammunition supplies that came in, and we would get it off to the Marine bases. Between our tiny huts, we put up this field, and one day I woke up and they had put this sign on the field that said “Staubach Stadium.”

ACG You have said that your heroes are military, so who are those heroes?

STAUBACH: They are Tommy Holden, my classmate who was killed in Vietnam, and other classmates of mine that gave their lives. They are also famous military people that I read about. I was in the Naval Academy, and those who really devoted their time and most of their livelihood to the military are heroes of mine.

ACG What process led you to end up at Annapolis after growing up in Cincinnati?

STAUBACH: Assistant Coach Rick Forzano came to my high school in 1960 because he wanted to talk to our center, who was interested in the Naval Academy. Rick was watching some film, and my coaches told him he needed to talk to the quarterback, so he called me out of class. I talked to him, and then my teammate and I went up to visit the Naval Academy, and I just took a liking to it.

ACG Is it true that you coined the now-famous phrase “Hail Mary Pass” after your legendary game-winning touchdown throw to Drew Pearson?

STAUBACH: Yes, it was 1975, the score was 14-10, and we were big underdogs as the wild-card team in the playoffs against Minnesota. On the play, the ball was a little underthrown, but Drew caught it and went into the end zone. After the game, a reporter asked, “What were you thinking about when you threw the ball?” I said, “I closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary.” That was the first time the phrase was ever used in the NFL. ★

John Ingoldsby, a leading writer on the intersection of sports and the military, conducted this interview. He is president of IIR Sports & Entertainment Inc. (iirsports.com), a public relations and writing firm in Boston. As a former newspaper reporter covering Fort Devens, Ingoldsby was the first New England media representative ever chosen by the Pentagon to cover NATO wargames in Europe. His father was a lieutenant colonel in General Patton's legendary 3d Army during World War II.

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