



# Rich McKay '84 assembles world champion football team

It's been a long road to success for Tampa Bay Buccaneers General Manager Rich McKay '84.

Now entering his ninth season as the Bucs' GM, McKay, was the architect of the personnel group that led the team to its first Super Bowl championship in January. However, his roots trace back to the beginning of the team as his father, the late legendary coach John McKay, was the team's first head coach.

As a Stetson student, McKay never dreamed he would one day be the general manager of the world champions. "I never went to Stetson with the idea that I would end up in sports," he said. "I went to Stetson with the idea that I was going to be a lawyer, so I wasn't trying to learn skills that would help me as a GM. I was trying to learn skills at Stetson that would help me as a lawyer."

Although he didn't set out to be a general manager, McKay pointed out that his legal training does come in handy. "The role is no longer just personnel first. You've got a lot more things to worry about, from the contractual side to the salary cap side, and all the legal issues we face on a daily basis. There's no question the education benefited me greatly."

This year's Super Bowl championship was a very fulfilling milestone in an already successful career. "For us it was great because we know where we started," said McKay. "In 1993, there was an article in *The Sporting News* listing the 10 worst organizations in professional sports, and I think the Buccaneers were second. We knew how far we had to come. It was a satisfying moment."

McKay added that the win was a great day for the Bucs fans, many of whom continued to support the team even through disappointing seasons. "I certainly can identify with them, because I remember going to many a game in the late '80s where the game was over at halftime."

These days, the fans and management alike have reason to celebrate. "It's very rewarding to go out on Sundays and see first of all a sold-out stadium and secondly a community that's into it," McKay said. "They're going to watch every game, every snap, every play and they're going to have an opinion about it, and to me that's a great thing."

Although tough decisions are a part of his job, "You make decisions based on what's best for the football team and the bottom line has to be winning," McKay said. "That's what our focus always has to be."

Not every fan is pleased with every decision the front office makes, but McKay constantly reminds himself, "Do not react to it. Just move on. Don't worry about the fact that they say they want to come burn your house down. Stay focused on what your decision-making process is, and how to go about it."

McKay credits his ability to stay calm in the midst of controversy to his legal training. "Managing and interacting with my clients when I practiced law helped me tremendously in trying to make decisions today in my present job," he said, adding that lawyers are often required to balance the emotional needs of a client with the need to obtain the best result possible.

Although many law school students may have dreams of similar fame and glory, McKay cautions them to not lose sight of more immediate concerns. "Stay focused on the task at hand, and the task at hand is going to law school and becoming a lawyer," he said. "Law school is a great thing. It's a great tool, and you should take it and use it. ... You shouldn't wake up every morning worrying about what you're going to do when you're out of law school. You should worry about what you're doing while you're in law school."

How do the world champion Buccaneers plan to follow their magical rise to the top? "With focus and a vision for the future," said McKay. "With free agency and the turnover you have in your team, you really have

to re-create yourself each year and that's what we're trying to do in this off-season. We've got to stay focused on trying to create a new team for this year."

The future looks bright for the world champion Buccaneers, and much of their success can be attributed to the front-office team headed by McKay. With this accomplished Stetson alumnus handling the personnel decisions, no doubt the Pewter Pirates will be among the league's elite teams for many years to come.



The Tampa Bay Mad Hatter Classic was first held in May 2002, and raised funds for scholarships for Hillsborough County Stetson students at both the College of Law and DeLand campuses. Coordinated by the Stetson University Hillsborough County Alumni Board, the 2002 silent auction and golf tournament raised almost \$12,000 in scholarships. Above, from left, is District Chair Gigi Skipper '87, Cliff Curry '81, Rich McKay '84, Cash Ulmer MBA '96, JD '97, Doug Tozier, scholarship recipient Richelle Marsico '02, Christy McGeachy, John Oakley and Stetson University Alumni Association President Luis Prats '81.



Stetson's Business Law Society invited Rich McKay to speak about his career at a lunch in March. Above, from left, Coordinator of the JD/MBA Program Jim Thaler '00, Keith Mancini, Joe Corselli, McKay and Christopher Hayes of the Business Law Society.



McKay, center, was the honorary chairman of the 2003 Tampa Bay Mad Hatter Classic held May 8 and 9. From left, Director of Alumni and Development Darlene Kelly, President Doug Lee, McKay, Associate Vice President for College Relations Dotti Bressi, and Hillsborough County Alumni Board member Col. Jorge Rodriguez pose with the Buccaneers' Vince Lombardi Trophy.

Left, Rich McKay stands with the world championship Vince Lombardi trophy. McKay's brother, John K. McKay '82, played football for the Buccaneers before entering law school at Stetson.