

# Marquette Catholic retires Craig Hentrich's No. 15 at Saturday home football team

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**ALTON** – Regardless of the sport, having one's jersey number retired is one of the highest honors a team can give to its greatest performers.

The St. Louis Cardinals have retired 12 of their numbers, including such greats as Ozzie Smith, Lou Brock, Red Schoendienst, Stan Musial and Bob Gibson. The St. Louis Blues have retired six numbers, including greats like Brett Hull, Barclay Plager, Brian Sutter and Al MacInnis.

**Marquette Catholic**, in a ceremony of their Saturday night game against Breese Mater Dei, honored one of their greatest players – **Craig Hentrich** – by retiring his No. 15 that he wore as a football player for the school in from the 1985-88 seasons.

Hentrich graduated from Marquette in 1989, being named to All-America high-school teams by Parade magazine, Superprep and USA Today, and went on to kick at Notre Dame, where he remains in second place for most points scored in a career along with most kicking points scored in a career (294), most extra points attempted in a career (180), most extra points kicked in a career (177), second-best punting average in a season (44.9 yards in 1990) and second-best punting average in a career (44.1 yards).

## **SEE VIDEO OF CRAIG HENTRICH'S JERSEY BEING RETIRED:**

Hentrich was drafted by the New York Jets in the 1993 NFL Draft but did not make the team and was signed by the Green Bay Packers soon after, playing in Green Bay from 1993-97 and then went to the Tennessee Oilers/Titans in 1998, where he played until 2009 before retiring. Along the way, he played in three Super Bowls, two with the Packers (XXXI against New England and XXXII against Denver) and one with the Titans (XXXIV against the then-St. Louis Rams); the Packers won Super Bowl XXXI against the Patriots. He retired from the NFL with a 42.9-yard punting average and made eight field goals in his career with a longest of 50 yards when he was with the Titans in 2004.

“It's a pretty special night for me,” Hentrich said in an interview prior to the ceremony. “The special part for me is not necessarily all the accolades and thins like that, it's seeing all the guys I played with and seeing them for the first time in almost 30 years. It's a special night for that reason.

“There was a lot of hard work that went into (Hentrich's NFL career); a lot of people helped me along the way, and tonight is about honoring those people who helped me get there.”

Hentrich had quite a bit of motivation to succeed in football. “I heard many times 'you're never going to get out of this town',” Hentrich said. “I'm the kind of guy who, if you set



that challenge to me, I'm going to prove you wrong. It's been a long road, but it's been a fun road.

“One of the best memories is just the guys I played with. We had a special group of guys and we all got along; we all played hard for each other. We had a great coaching staff we played hard for and that's what it's all about in high school football.”

When asked what he might have done had he not played football, Hentrich said “that's a good question; I don't know. Football was all I knew.” When asked about his thoughts about the Rams' departure back to Los Angeles, Hentrich said, “quite honestly, when I retired (from the NFL), I retired; I don't keep up with the football much anymore. I watch the Titans play and watch with my boys on Sunday and that's about it.”

Hentrich today lives near Nashville, Tenn., and owns a furniture store where he builds and reclaims wood furniture. His family, including wife Lisa, daughter Abbey who was unable to attend, sons Nate and Sam, parents and sister were on hand for the ceremony as well as several teammate of his during his time at Marquette, as well as former coach Mike Slaughter (who is the current Marquette principal) and Greg DeCoursey (who is the current assistant principal) and his Marquette coach John Waters, who spoke at the ceremony.

