



Troy Aikman

Troy Aikman is a former quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys of the National Football League, and currently a television sportscaster for the Fox network. He is also a joint owner of the NASCAR Sprint Cup racing team, Hall of Fame Racing, along with fellow former Cowboys quarterback, Roger Staubach. He is considered among the best NFL quarterbacks of all time, and was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2006. He is referred to as one of "The Triplets" with Cowboys teammates Michael Irvin and Emmitt Smith. Aikman was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame on December 9, 2008 in New York City.

The youngest of three children, Aikman was born in West Covina, California, and lived in Cerritos, California until age 12, when his family moved to a farm in Henryetta, Oklahoma. In *Things Change*, an account of his life written for kids, Aikman recounted that he thought his athletic career was over, but, to his surprise, it was just beginning. He made All State in both football and baseball, and his high school, Henryetta High School, retired his football jersey. In high school, he was also involved in the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), the influence of which can be seen in his business ventures.

The New York Mets offered Aikman a contract out of high school, but instead of playing baseball he chose to pursue football and attended the University of Oklahoma under head coach Barry Switzer. In 1984, his first season as a collegiate starter, Aikman led the Sooners to wins over Minnesota, Kansas State, and #17 Texas in the Red River Shootout before hosting the Miami Hurricanes and his future head coach Jimmy Johnson.

On October 19, Miami's Jerome Brown broke through the offensive line, sacked Aikman on the Sooner 29-yard line and broke Aikman's ankle. Aikman, who had been six of eight passing for 131 yards, would be lost for the season. Switzer and offensive coordinator Jim Donnan were forced to switch back to the wishbone offense under freshman quarterback Jamelle Holieway. The team went on to win the 1985 National Championship by beating Penn State in the 1986 Orange Bowl. With Holieway established as the starting quarterback at OU, Aikman decided to transfer to UCLA.

Switzer oversaw Aikman's transfer to UCLA, a program under Terry Donahue that was more conducive to a passing quarterback. He had to redshirt one year due to college transfer rules but went on to lead the Bruins to a 20-4 record over two seasons. As a junior, Aikman led the Bruins to a 10-2 record and the 1987 Aloha Bowl, where they beat the Florida Gators 20-16.

As a senior, Aikman won the 1988 Davey O'Brien Award as the nation's top quarterback, a first for UCLA. He was a Consensus All-American, the UPI West Coast Player of the Year, the Washington DC Club QB of the Year, a finalist for the 1988 AFCA "Coaches Choice" Player of the year award, and he finished third for the 1988 Heisman Trophy.



UCLA matched the victory total from the previous season under Aikman, going 10-2 and losing only to USC and Washington State. The 1988 season culminated with a 17-3 Bruin victory over the Arkansas Razorbacks in the 1989 Cotton Bowl, which was played in Dallas. The Dallas media spent most of the Cotton Bowl week promoting Aikman as the "next quarterback of the Cowboys," and much was made of Tom Landry watching Troy Aikman practice during the Bruins' workouts at Texas Stadium. Aikman finished his career as the number two career passing leader in UCLA history. In 2008 he was elected to the college football hall of fame.

Aikman was the No. 1 overall pick in the 1989 NFL Draft, taken by the Dallas Cowboys. On February 25, 1989, new owner Jerry Jones fired Tom Landry, and replaced him with Jimmy Johnson. A few months later in the NFL's supplemental draft, Johnson drafted Steve Walsh, who played for Johnson at the University of Miami. Aikman won the starting quarterback job, and Walsh was traded early in the 1990 season.

Aikman's NFL career started with a 28–0 loss to the New Orleans Saints. The following week, Aikman threw his first touchdown pass, a 65-yard completion to Michael Irvin, but the Atlanta Falcons intercepted two passes and won. In a game against the Phoenix Cardinals, he threw for 379 to set an NFL rookie record. He finished 1989 with an 0-11 record as a starter, completing 155 of 293 passes for 1,749 yards, 9 TDs, 18 INTs.

Aikman proved resilient, however, and in 1990, nearly led the Cowboys to the playoffs. In 1991, he led the Cowboys to a 6-5 record in the first 11 games and had the Cowboys ahead in week 12 against undefeated Washington when he was injured. Steve Beuerlein replaced Aikman and went on to lead the Cowboys to a playoff win. Aikman played in a NFC Divisional Playoff game against the Detroit Lions, but lost, 38-6. However, he was selected to the first of six consecutive Pro Bowls.

In 1992, Aikman set career highs in completions (302), passing yards (3,445) and touchdown passes (23), and led the Cowboys to a team record 13 regular season victories. During the playoffs Aikman broke Joe Montana's record of 83 passes without an interception by throwing 89. The team won Super Bowl XXVII against the Buffalo Bills, 52–17. Aikman, named Super Bowl MVP, completed 22-of-30 passes for 273 yards with 4 TDs.

In 1993, Aikman posted a 99.0 passer rating, and Dallas finished with a 12–4 record and defeated the Bills again in Super Bowl XXVIII. Johnson left the team on March 29 1994, and Jones hired Barry Switzer, a former college teammate at the University of Arkansas. The Cowboys subsequently lost the NFC Championship game to the San Francisco 49ers.



In 1995, Aikman amassed over 3,300 yards passing as the Cowboys won Super Bowl XXX, beating the Pittsburgh Steelers 27–17. In 1997, Aikman became the first quarterback in Dallas history to have three straight 3,000-yard seasons, but the team finished 6–10 and missed the playoffs. Switzer suffered the first losing season of his career. He resigned in 1997.

Revolving-door personnel changes plagued the Cowboys for the rest of Aikman's tenure. He also suffered a series of concussions. His 10th, at the hands of Washington Redskins linebacker LaVar Arrington, would end his career. The Cowboys finished the 2000 season 5-11.

After he was waived a day before he was due a \$70 million/7-year contract extension, Aikman announced his retirement on April 9, 2001 after failing to find another team. He ended his career as the Cowboys' all-time leading passer (32,942 yards). 90 of his 94 career wins were in the 1990s and were the most by any quarterback in any decade until Peyton Manning surpassed him in the 2000's with 101.

After his retirement as a player, Aikman joined Fox's NFC telecasts as a color commentator for the 2001 season. A year later, he was named to the network's lead announcing crew, teaming with Joe Buck and (from 2002–2005) Cris Collinsworth. Aikman received an Emmy Award nomination for his television work in 2004 and has helped broadcast two Super Bowls (XXXIX and XLII) to date.

Aikman also hosts a weekly sports radio show which airs on Thursday from 7 to 8 p.m. ET on Sporting News Radio, and appears weekly during the football season on the Dunham & Miller morning show on Dallas sports talk radio station 1310 The Ticket. He was a public spokesman for Acme Brick throughout his career. He is also the chairman of the Troy Aikman Foundation, a charity to benefit children that has recently focused on building playplaces for children's hospitals.

In 1999, he was ranked No. 95 on *The Sporting News*' list of the 100 Greatest Football Players. Also in 1999, Aikman appeared in the Simpsons episode "Sunday, Cruddy Sunday".

On September 19, 2005, at halftime of the Cowboys-Redskins game (broadcast on *Monday Night Football*), Aikman was inducted into the Dallas Cowboys Ring of Honor with his longtime teammates Michael Irvin and Emmitt Smith. On August 5, 2006, Aikman was one of six players inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. When he accepted the honor, the ever-modest Aikman commented that he was merely a beneficiary of the Cowboys' system and being paired with subsequent Hall-of-Famers Irvin and Smith.



In late 2005, Aikman together with another former Cowboys quarterback, Roger Staubach, established Hall of Fame Racing with Terry Labonte and Tony Raines co-driving the #96 DLP HDTV Chevrolet in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series in 2006 (the race car's number was derived by multiplying Aikman's Cowboy jersey number 8 by Staubach's jersey number 12). Raines drove for Aikman full time in 2007, and J.J. Yeley and Brad Coleman drove the car in 2008. He has invited some of the current and former Dallas Cowboys players Drew Bledsoe, Terry Glenn, Roy Williams, and others to test drive NASCAR race cars at Texas Motor Speedway.

Aikman, once named the most eligible bachelor in Dallas by *Texas Monthly*, married former Cowboys publicist Rhonda Worthey on April 8, 2000. They have three children: Rachel Worthey (from Rhonda's previous marriage), daughter Jordan Ashley Aikman born August 24, 2001, and daughter Alexa Marie Aikman born July 30, 2002