Born the son of an NFL football player who later became a head coach, you would think former
MSU quarterback Bryan Clark (1978-81) was destined to become a football player. “It wasn’t that
way at my house,” Bryan recently told me during our interview at a restaurant in Royal Oak. “My
father was low key, he never pushed me into football,” he continued while speaking about his
late father, Monte Clark.

Bryan’s well known dad played for three teams in the NFL. Monte Clark started his career
with San Francisco in 1959. He played one season in Dallas and was traded to Cleveland where he
became a fixture at offensive tackle for the powerful Cleveland Browns.

After calling it a career in 1969, Clark landed a job as an assistant to Don Shula in Miami where he
coached one of the greatest offensive lines ever to play the game. In 1977, he was
named Detroit’s head coach and remained with the Lions until his dismissal in 1984.

“I was born on July 27, 1960 in Redwood City, California,” Bryan stated, “near the 49ers training
camp when my dad was playing for San Francisco. And while my family never shoved football
down my throat, like most of my friends, I became a sports geek and started playing ball. I grew
up following college and pro football, and baseball. I followed all the local teams,” he added.

“But as a player, football was my best sport and I had an edge over most guys because of my
father and being able to attend his camps and clinics.”

Unlike his father’s huge 6’6” and 260 lb. frame, Bryan stands 6’2”, but weighed in at only 168 lbs.
as a freshman at MSU. He played his high school ball in the tough Santa Clara Valley League
where he started at quarterback during his junior and senior seasons. In his two years as the
signal caller for the Los Altos Knights, Bryan compiled an 18-5 record and received All-League
honors as well as being named team MVP. Following his solid senior season, Bryan received scholarship offers from Long Beach State, San
Diego State and Michigan State.

I wasn’t highly recruited at MSU,” he told me. My offer came during the time my father was head
coach for the Lions. “They kind of looked at me as a sleeper,” he explained.

As a freshman in 1978, Bryan spent most of his time on the bench watching Ed Smith throw
touchdown passes to Kirk Gibson. “Gibson (the Arizona Diamondbacks fiery MVP manager) was
tough on me,” Bryan recalled. “If I happened to misfire on a pass during pre-game drills, he
would get after me.”
It was the year when Michigan State won a share of the Big Ten title and broke a long losing streak against Bo Schembechler’s team. The Spartans’ explosive air attack won several games by blowouts during their championship run and Coach Darryl Rogers was able to give Bryan enough playing time to earn a letter.

As a sophomore, Bryan split his playing time with Bert Vaughn. The Spartans finished with a 5-6 record in Darryl Rogers' final season.

In limited action, Bryan threw for 800 yards to go along with 4 TD tosses.

Following a down year in 1980, Bryan made a decision that he credits with turning around his career. “I was attending summer school and decided to hit the weight room,” he recalled. “Back then, lifting was almost optional. Nothing like we see today,” he continued. “I concentrated on my upper body so I could increase my arm strength. Before the end of the summer I was bench pressing 300 pounds.”

Bryan began his senior season at close to 200 lbs, and the long hours he spent lifting led to a vastly improved game. In spite of missing a few games due to injuries, he passed for over 1500 yards and completed 14 TD passes. “The best throw I made that year was a 63 yard bomb to Daryl Turner against Notre Dame,” Bryan vividly recalls, with a smile on his face. “We were basically a passing team and I was surrounded by some great receivers in Daryl, Ted Jones, Otis Grant and Al Kimichick.”

While reminiscing about his senior campaign, three games stand out in Bryan’s memory. In a losing effort against Michigan, Bryan kept the Spartans in the contest by passing for 318 yards and 2 for touchdowns.

His two other special days ended with MSU victories. “My father only got to see me play in one game, and that's when he was flown into East Lansing on a helicopter for our homecoming
against Wisconsin" Bryan stated. It was a day when Bryan carved up the Badger secondary, throwing for 291 yards and 3 TDs in a 33-21 Spartan triumph.

Bryan’s final big moment came on Senior Day against Minnesota. In a back and forth game, he rallied the Spartans to a 4th quarter comeback. With 15 seconds left on the clock, Bryan broke a tie with a quarterback draw to cap off his game winning drive in the Spartans’ 43-36 victory.

Bryan’s season was rewarded by being voted team MVP and was selected to play in the Blue-Grey All-Star game. Although he shared playing time throughout his career, Bryan’s numbers still standout in the MSU record book. He is tied for 10th all time with 20 touchdown passes and ranks number 11 with 14 TD tosses in a single season. Not bad for a guy who was considered a sleeper pick when he received his scholarship offer!

After his senior season, Bryan headed back to San Francisco as a 9th round draft pick. “Our coach was Bill Walsh and his playbook was complicated, filled with different schemes I had to learn. Walsh had a good sense of humor,” Bryan added as he described the 49er’s offensive guru. “I didn’t get any snaps in San Francisco. I was playing behind a quarterback by the name of Joe Montana, you might have heard of him,” he said with a forced smile that looked more like a grimace.

“Playing behind Montana and not getting many reps made me lose my competitive edge,” Bryan stated as he described his NFL career that ended with a short stint in Cincinnati—but gave him enough time to earn a pension. Or you could put it this way, Bryan said with a grin: “I retired from the NFL because of illness; the coaches were SICK of me!”

Since the end of his playing days, Bryan (who majored in Communications) has worked in the insurance industry. In 1999 he became an independent broker, selling health and life insurance. And two years ago obtained a license to sell property and casualty policies.

“My company is called “All Pro Benefits”. “I was All League in high school, MVP at MSU, bench warmer in the NFL, but now I’m ALL PRO.” Bryan recently joined the McLeod Koski Agency in Bloomfield Hills and told me all the producers in the business are former Spartans.
This former State quarterback still has a passion for Spartan football. I keep in touch with my former teammates, Jeff Wiska (OT) and Mike Jones (WR). “I went to all the home games this year and I’m proud of the legacy our senior class left for future teams to build on,” he told me. “Also, I’m starting to get involved with the player’s association.”

Bryan resides in Bloomfield Hills and has three children. His daughter Chelsea, 25, graduated from MSU and is currently working for the Epitec Health Care team in Southfield. Daughter Cassie, 21, is an art history major at Wayne State. And son Tyler, 16, is a junior at Lasher high school in Bloomfield Hills. He’s a diver and advanced to the Regionals in his first year at the sport. (Finally he said he’d love to hear from any former Spartans and can be reached at mbryanclark@gmail.com).