

Christine Brennan to give 2017 commencement address

Christine Brennan, a sports columnist for USA Today, once sat in the stands of the Glass Bowl as a child next to her dad, watching the Rockets win some of their biggest victories.

Brennan will be returning to the Glass Bowl once again as commencement speaker for the second time to share her experiences as an award-winning journalist and how UT has played a role in getting her there.

The audience at the commencement can look forward to a speech discussing dreams, how Toledo launched her and how that affected her life, Brennan said.

“It’s a great honor because UT is such a great part of my childhood, so it’s just wonderful to come back,” Brennan said. “I’m thrilled to be able to do that.”

Having grown up on Barrington Street, she could see the stadium lights and hear the dings of the clock tower from her house, Brennan said.

“We would cross Bancroft, and we would just walk onto the campus and in a couple minutes we were at the football stadium; it was magical to me,” Brennan said. “So all my early experiences as a child were sports because of the University of Toledo.”

The 1969-1971 Rocket football teams had a 35-0 record; Brennan said she recalls going to every game and credits that team for showing her how wonderful sports could be.

“It was just amazing. We had season tickets on the 40-yard line and right under the press box,” Brennan said. “It’s so rewarding for me that...[that] sports would give back in this

manner, so I don't think it's any surprise I became a sports journalist."

Brennan, a Northwestern alumna, has received many awards and honors for her work. According to Brennan's website, she has twice been named one of the country's top 10 sports columnists by the Associated Press sports editors, and she has been honored by the NCAA and the Women's Sports Foundation, among other awards.

Along with her many accomplishments, Brennan said she funds a scholarship at UT in honor of her late parents.

"My parents were certainly my inspiration and started me on this path," she said. "They encouraged me and gave me every opportunity to have the experiences I have today. I am the luckiest person on earth."

Brennan said the secret to success is that there is no secret to success; it's all about hard work and dedication.

"I am very proud to be a journalist; it's an adventure of a lifetime," she said. "I've never worked a day in my life. I love what I'm doing today more than the day I started back in April of 1981."

Dr. Gaber, UT president, said that the Toledo native brings both small and big town perspectives.

"She's a nationally known figure in journalism, and her growing up in Toledo shows that someone from Toledo can go on and do great things," Gaber said.

Brandon Hill, a third-year communication major, said Brennan can inspire graduates not to give up on their dreams and try to make a difference in whatever line of work they are going into.

"It's really cool that someone of her stature in the industry would be willing to come back to Toledo," he said.