

Inducted into the Valley Forge Hall of Fame on Friday, September 15, 2006

James Kovach *Class of 1974*

James Kovach, MD, JD was appointed President and Chief Operating Officer at the Buck Institute for Age Research in July 2005. Prior to his appointment, Kovach was Executive Vice President and COO of Athersys, Inc., a Cleveland, Ohio biotechnology company. He has also directed the Office of Technology Management at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland. Prior to establishing a career which spans academic medicine and the biotechnology industry, Kovach spent seven years as a middle linebacker in the National Football League, attending medical school in consecutive off seasons while he earned his degree, which was granted in 1984, with distinction. He played with the New Orleans Saints (1979-85) and the San Francisco Forty-Niners (1985). In New Orleans Kovach was the defensive signal caller. In 1983, he was named 1st team All-National Football Conference (UPI) and was voted by his teammates as Most Valuable Player in 1983. After graduating from medical school at the University of Kentucky with distinction, Kovach obtained his law degree from Stanford University.

Specific Accomplishments

- All-time leading tackler in University of Kentucky history (career leader in solos, assists, and total tackles)
- Credited with 521 tackles, including a season-high 164 in 1978
- Four-year letterman
- Consensus first-team All-Southeastern Conference in 1978
- Second-team All-SEC in 1975 and 1976
- Kentucky Football Most Valuable Player in 1978
- Named to the Academic All-SEC Honor Roll four times
- 2-Time University of Kentucky Outstanding Athlete (1976 & 1978)
- Academic All-American in 1978
- First Team All- South (Southern Living) 1978



- Earned the 1978 National Football Foundation Scholar-Athlete Award
- NCAA Top Five Student-Athlete, 1978
- Received 1979 NCAA Post-Graduate Scholarship
- Played in the 1978 Hula Bowl
- Played in the 1979 Senior Bowl
- Starter on University of Kentucky All-Century Team (Cincinnati Enquirer)
- Phi Beta Kappa
- Fourth round draft choice by the New Orleans Saints in 1979
- Played professionally with New Orleans (1979-85) and San Francisco (1985)
- New Orleans Saints Team MVP – 1983
- All-NFC (UPI) – 1983
- Four-time leading tackler for the New Orleans Saints (1981-84)
- Attended medical school and earned medical degree while playing in the NFL (MD awarded, with distinction, August 1984)
- Tackled Walter Payton on the play that broke Jim Brown's NFL rushing record
- First player in modern NCAA history to attend graduate school (medical school) while playing major college football (1978 season)
- Member of the All-New Orleans Saints 20th anniversary team (1967-1987)
- Earned a law degree at Stanford University
- Currently President and COO of the Buck Institute for Age Research in Novato, California.