

Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

Tuesday, July 19, 2016

Matthew Sign

National Football Foundation COO

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Matthew Sign, National Football Foundation Chief Operating Officer. Matthew, welcome.

MATTHEW SIGN: Thank you very much. Good morning! I hope everyone is doing well. On behalf of our Chairman, Archie Manning, our president and CEO, Steve Hatchell, our Board of Directors and the over 12,000 members of the National Football Foundation, it's an honor and privilege to be with you here today.

I would like to first thank the Big 12 Conference membership and staff for providing us this wonderful opportunity. In particular, Commissioner and NFF board member, Bob Bowlsby. We greatly appreciate your support. Also, like to thank the Football Writers Association of America for their support and their coverage throughout the year.

So we would like to thank their members and in particular, Executive Director Steve Richardson. For those of you who are not members of the FWAA, we would encourage you to join and support your craft.

We also congratulate the electees into, the newest electees into the College Football Hall of Fame. In particular, Iowa State's Troy Davis. He along with 13 other members of the 2016 class will be honored at the 59th Annual Awards Dinner in New York on Tuesday, December 6th, at the Waldorf Astoria. Among those also be honored is the University of Texas Chancellor William McRaven who will receive the NFF's Distinguished American Award. He joins the like of Vince Lombardi, Boone Pickens and Alan Page. Baylor Hall of Fame Coach and Chairman, Emeritus of the American Football Coaches Association, Grant Teaff, will also be honored with the outstanding contribution to amateur football.

The National Football Foundation would also like to salute the more than 15,000 high school football coaches across the country for all they do on a daily basis to ensure that more than 1.1 million young men who play high school football are prepared and ready to embrace the opportunities the game can provide.

The sport continues to grow, and the high school



coaches lay the foundation for that success. Speaking of success, a record 774 colleges and universities are now sponsoring intercollegiate football. In the past, four seasons alone, 36 programs have been added, while another 11 programs will take the field in 2016 and 2017. Including one right here in the Metroplex, Texas Wesleyan University. These programs are a valuable addition to the community and their institution, but most important they provide an opportunity for young men to receive education through a full scholarship, sometimes a partial scholarship and grants and aid while living out their dreams and achieving their personal goals.

The NFF strongly believes in the game and the value of an education. Each fall we receive close to 200 nominations for the William V. Campbell Trophy presented by Fidelity Investments, which is awarded annually to college football's top scholar athlete. From that group of 12-15 young men selected as finalists are then honored at the NFF's Annual Awards Dinner where the Campbell Trophy Award recipient is announced and that recipient also receives a \$25,000 post-graduate scholarship.

Past recipients have included Peyton Manning, Texas's Sam Acho and last season Oklahoma's Ty Darlington. Not only was he a three-year starter, but he capped in the 2015 Big 12 champs, and he did it all the while graduating in two and a half years with a 3.91 GPA in arts and sciences. Along with every other student athlete who has been nominated for the Campbell Trophy it is further greatness proving that greatness can be achieved on the field and in the classroom. That greatness often carries over into life with lessons learned from the game and the college experience are applied in achieving success later in life.

Most of these successes are unknown and many of the best stories remain untold stories. That is why in the fall of 2014 the NFF launched footballMatters.org. It provides an outlet to tell the stories of football players who are making a difference in their chosen profession. Whether they are mayors displaying true leadership, news reporters breaking a major story, or CEOs directing a Fortune 500 company. The site also provides insight and perspective from moms with their testimonials and showcases current players who are embracing opportunity and making a difference.

The NFF's motto is, "Building Leaders Through Football," and whether it is recognizing an institution's outstanding student-athlete's past or present, promoting the good in the game, identifying the nation's most influential leaders, providing a platform at the College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta, fostering the game through 121 chapters across the country, or partnering with the College Football Playoff, our programs and initiatives are designed to promote the game while supporting all those who are committed to the game's betterment now and in the future.

The National Football Foundation strongly believes in the opportunities football provides and the difference it makes in the lives of young men across the country. It creates a work ethic, a discipline and a willingness to work with others that is unlike any other sport or exercise in this country. We all agree that these are challenging times, but as the words of one of our founders, General Douglas MacArthur, that we can all find football to be a source of inspiration. And I quote, "The game has become a symbol of our country's best qualities, courage, stamina, coordinated efficiency. Many even believe in these cynical days of doubt and indecision that through this sport, we can best keep alive the spirit of reality and enterprise which has made us great."

That brief passage is from his Gold Medal acceptance speech at the National Football Foundation's Second Annual Awards dinner in 1959. Yes, we live in challenging times, yet his words spoken nearly 60 years ago still ring true today. Again, I want to thank the Big 12 Conference, the media here in attendance, and all the stakeholders for helping the National Football Foundation build leaders through football. Thank you very much. All the best. Have a great day.