

December 8, 2009



An interview with:

2009 HALL OF FAME CLASS

THE MODERATOR: I would first like to introduce the President of the National Football Foundation, Steve Hatchell. He is the former executive director of the FedEx Orange Bowl, and commissioner of the Metro Southwest and Big 12 Conferences. Steve stands as one of the top athletic administrators in the country. We'll start it off with Steve Hatchell.

STEVE HATCHELL: Thank you. Good morning, everybody. It's wonderful to have you here. And on behalf of our board of directors, we want to thank you for taking the time to join us this morning. As Bill had pointed out, and we're thrilled to have Bill Little from the University of Texas who has driven their media opportunities for 42 years to be with us, Bill. So thank you so much for joining us.

Like to also thank the members of the National Football Foundation Gridiron Club who joined us here today. And with our home in Dallas, Texas, we needed a structure and a platform in the Northeastern, so we thank everybody with the Gridiron Club of New York, and specifically Columbia Athletics Director, Diane Murphy. Who she and her staff do everything they can to help the National Football Foundation. We appreciate that.

Thank you to all of you media members here today, and I should say more friends. What you do in the promotion of football helps us so much in college football, so thank you. We appreciate you as you help us on our journey.

I would also like to congratulate our Hall of Famers and scholar-athlete class and major award winners. This is a wonderful year for us. And the reason that this is so terrific is that we're celebrating a lot of anniversaries. This is the 50th Anniversary of our scholar-athlete program of the and when you go back and look at what's

happened with our scholar athletes and who has been scholar athletes for us and what they've gone on to be in terms of great leaders in this country, it's spectacular.

It's also the 50th anniversary of the chapter program, the 20th anniversary of the Campbell Trophy which a lot of people refer to as the Academic Heisman. So it's a very, very significant year for us.

Couple of other highlights. We announced earlier this year that we are moving our Hall of Fame to Atlanta, Georgia, and along with the Atlanta Sports Commission, Peach Bowl, Inc., the Chick-fil-A people, the governor, the mayor, we're thrilled that in September of 2012 that we'll have a new Hall of Fame. We've had a spectacular and wonderful platform in South Bend, Indiana, and we felt this is an opportunity for us to make a change.

Next, we've changed the trophy to the Campbell Trophy because we felt that Bill Campbell represented everything we try to promote in college football. Bill Campbell was a great player, a coach, and has gone on to be a terrific business leader. And we felt that this embodied more of what we're trying to portray across the country.

We've added some new people to our board of directors, Ray Anderson, Bill Battle, Tim Cook, Bob Epling, Jim Nantz, Boone Pickens and Troy Aikman who joined a wonderful board that we have already, who do nothing but work hard to promote college football, And they do it all at their expense.

Our established programs continue to grow and to take off. We do have some friends here today that help us in our journey, Liberty Mutual, Sprint Turf, Shut Sports, Healthsouth, Chick-fil-A, Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, Nasdaq, ESPN, Exos Technology and Collegiate Images.

And very soon with a new website starting the early part of this year, we'll be able to disseminate great things in college football historically that we've never been able to do that

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before. So our board is to be congratulated for an aggressive stance on that.

Large part of our success lies in our leadership. And couple of years ago we were fortunate to talk Archie Manning into taking over as our chairman. He's very busy. As you know he's got a couple of sons who do pretty well, and he's got to track them down, quarterbacks all. And we were very, very fortunate that Archie said if we carefully orchestrate things, that he would be our chairman.

So we have been blessed with having Archie coming on board. You know him as an Ole Miss legend. He's an inductee into the College Football Hall of Fame. Great impact on the sport. Archie, along with the other 41 members of our board of directors, really embody so many wonderful things about football. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Archie Manning and thank you all for being here today.

ARCHIE MANNING: Thank you, Steve, it's great to work with you. It's a privilege for me to serve as National Football Foundation Chairman the last two years. I've certainly enjoyed working with Steve and working with this board is truly an honor.

I also want to congratulate the 2009 Hall of Famers, the 2009 National Scholar Athletes, our Gold Medal recipient, Mr. Phil Knight, and my friend Billy Payne, the distinguished American who loves to tell people about the pass or passes he intercepted off me in 1968.

Like this organization, each 2009 honoree epitomizes everything right about college football. And we hope by highlights their accomplishments today we'll inspire others to follow in their footsteps of the.

Also want to thank the media for turning out today. I think too many times some members of the media focus on the sensational side of our game and really missing the true heroes that make this a great game.

National Football Foundation represents everything great -- everything that's right about our game. And I encourage you, the media, to shine a light on our efforts. From the Hall of Fame to our grass roots initiatives that touch the lives of more than 400,000 young players each year. There are plenty of compelling stories to tell, and we urge you to link with us.

So big thanks to the media who joins us today of the now turn it back over to our good friend, bill, who can introduce the honorees this

year and let them talk about the role that football has played in their lives. Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. As we look at the group that is on the dais, for context, you should know that 4.72 million people have played in college football since the first game in 1869, and only 1052 individuals have been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

So clearly the accomplishments of this group places each of them among the greatest of all times.

As for our Gold Medal and Distinguished American honorees, they have joined an elite list that includes seven U.S. Presidents, seven U.S. Generals, three U.S. Admirals, a U.S. Supreme Court Justice, 32 corporate CEOs, and a select group of men with a strong passion for the game of football that went on to become some of our country's greatest leaders.

To begin, I will ask the question of each of the recipient inductees what it means to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, and I'll start from 1958 to 1960. At New Mexico State, half back Pervis Atkins led the nation in rushing and punt return yardage. In 1959 as the Aggies only first team All American selection. To begin with, here's Pervis Atkins, and Pervis, the question is what does it mean?

PERVIS ATKINS: Boy, it gives us an opportunity to be seen. We've tried. We've given our best on the gridiron, and now it's time to join you guys. The kind of job that you're doing, the reaching out for new football players, and not just simple football players, but guys with sharp educations. Guys that are going to move forward. Guys that are going to give this place a big, big helping.

This foundation is unreal. It's all over the country. It's moving into other nations and it's going to continue to do that.

I'm just so proud and so pleased that I'm one of your inductees. Thank you so much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. From 1984 to 1987 at Notre Dame, wide receiver Tim Brown, the winner of the 1987 Heisman Trophy, and unanimous first team All American selection, here's Tim Brown.

TIM BROWN: Thank you very much. First I apologize for being late. But don't get a chance to sleep in that often, so took advantage of it this morning. For me, what it means going into the College Football Hall of Fame is not even dreams

come true, but miracles come true.

Being a young kid in south Dallas growing up, you love playing football. You dreamed of a lot of things. But when I left Dallas, Texas in 1984, the last thing that I would have thought winning the Heisman Trophy and ended up in the College Football Hall of Fame.

So for all the kids out there who look at Tim Brown, you know, miracles, dreams absolutely do come true if you do the right thing. So for that I will always be grateful to be enshrined with these great men that we're going in with this year.

I'm looking forward to representing the foundation as best I can in the coming years.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Tim. Our next inductee is Chuck Cecil, the defensive back from Arizona in 1984 to 1987. As all of you know he is currently in season and not able to be with us. But he is represented by his wife Carrie. He was the Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year in 1987. He was twice named the first team Academic All American. And he did pretty darn well when he married the right woman. Carrie, would you please speak for your husband.

CARRIE CECIL: Thank you very much. I asked my husband what it meant for him to be here about a month ago, and he told me at about 2:00 o'clock this morning. I think the Hall of Fame for him means many things, commitment, and character, and dedication. And it's that same dedication that's earned him this honor of why he can't be here. The dedication to the Titans and other coaches and players.

Last night he summed it up, and he said it was surreal. And for the first time I really heard the sadness that he couldn't be here and what it meant to get this honor of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

But he did send me a couple of quotes so I will read them on his behalf. On behalf of the entire University of Arizona Wildcat family, I'm extremely honored and privileged to be included in this class of inductees. To be in the company of the elite organization with men like Archie Manning, Troy Aikman and Joe Paterno.

There are so many people that he would like to thank from his coaches and teammates and family and friends. Ted Schmidt, the former Arizona Chapter President for the College Football Hall of Fame and Jim Livengood, the University of Arizona athletic director.

To his wife -- okay, I wrote that (laughing) -- and to the Lord who gave us a wonderful daughter named Charlie. Without the help, and guidance and love of these people, this he is

teemed honor would never have been possible. He has truly lived the dream. He was a walk-on at the University of Arizona, and people always meet him and say gosh, I thought you'd be bigger. So he gives hope that it isn't about your size, it's really about your character on and off the field.

Without these people, he said this esteemed honor would never have been possible. And he can never repay what the game of football has done for him. He's extremely humbled by this honor, and he hopes in some small way that he can continue to contribute to the game that has given him this life. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: 1958 to 1960 at Auburn, fullback Ed Dyas, a first team All American from 1960. Fourth in the Heisman voting, he also claims a National Football National Scholar-Athlete Award, Ed Dyas. Ed?

ED DYAS: 49 years ago I came to this function as a scholarship winner. Quite a group of guys back then. They gave us \$1,000 to study, which paid about half the year's tuition at Tulane where I went to school. It was a big help back then.

I was a country town boy when I came up to Auburn. I had never seen the big city before. And I froze to death. Because my folks sent me off with a suit. And it seemed the whole week the snow up here was about waist deep. But we made it through, and I've thought of the Hall of Fame all of these years. Anticipated it somewhat. I had hoped through the years perhaps I'd get in. But after 49 years I figured well, there's not much chance.

My wife and I were sitting watching the evening news April 29th, I believe, and the phone rang. It was the FedEx people saying they had a package for me. But they couldn't deliver it because it was the wrong address. So the next day I knew that the announcement was coming out about the winners, and I knew they would have notified me had I won. So I went and got the package, and opened it up, and there was the football from the Hall of Fame and the letter - Congratulations, you've been inducted into the 2009 class. It put me on cloud 9.

I was crying. My wife was crying. It was the greatest thing that's ever happened to me. I surely feel like I've reached the pinnacle of success in the game. But it's helped me greatly. I'm humbled and deeply appreciative of this honor.

THE MODERATOR: From 1987 to 1989

at West Virginia, quarterback, Major Harris, one of the first dual threat quarterbacks ever to rush for more than 2,000 yards, pass for more than 5,000 yards in a career. Major?

MAJOR HARRIS: As far as for me, I would have to say it's the icing on the cake for my career. You know, when I look back at my career, you know, you never dream of making the College Football Hall of Fame. Basically you're out there just having fun. Then when something like this happens, I mean, it's like I'm kind of shellshocked.

I kind of compare it to like we're all airplanes, but as far as college sports, this is where you want to land, thank you.

THE MODERATOR: From 1980 to 1983 at BYU, tight end, Gordon Hudson. Unanimous first team All American. Still holds multiple NCAA tight end receiving records. Gordon Hudson.

GORDON HUDSON: You know, I'm going to echo Major. For me it was just an honor to be nominated. And, you know, I would have been happy and proud just for that. I still don't think it's set in for me. Everybody keeps saying, you know, wait until tomorrow, wait until tomorrow.

I've got to thank my great Coach Lavelle Edwards for giving me a shot. I was not highly recruited. In fact, I played basketball in high school and took a chance. And it does go to show that everybody out there should get a chance and should never be told no.

This is the culmination of my career you know, I have to thank my family and the foundation. They've been great. Like I said, I'm just so humbled to be here. Like I said, just the nomination was enough. To have this is pretty special, so thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: The next member of the class played from 1892 to 1893 at Harvard. William Lewis is obviously not with us, and is elected to the Hall of Fame from the veterans committee which is a unique case from more than 50 years ago. The first African-American to ever earn first team All American honors. He helped Harvard complete a 22-2 record during his two seasons.

We are proud to recognize his accomplishments and include him as a member of the 2009 class. He will be recognized tonight when we are able to display his credit.

From 1972 to 1975 at Alabama, linebacker Woodrow Lowe was the first of only two Alabama players to ever be named a three-time first team All American. Woodrow Lowe.

WOODROW LOWE: Thank you. It's kind of hard to express all the gladness and excitement that's in my heart right now. I want to thank the NFL, and I want to thank the University of Alabama.

I also want to thank the NFL and my high school and all the people that had something to do with me being here right now sitting in this seat. You know, this is a deeply humbling event that over the years I never dreamed of. In the high school arena, college arena and the NFL, there are a lot of people. People that I see here from every area here honoring me.

But I must admit now deeply that it's never been about me. It's been about people, the mothers. It's about the sports writers. It's about fans, the spectators that make this something special.

You know, Coach Bryant used to say you're special. You're special. And to be honest, you know, most of these guys over here will tell you right now that playing this game is easy. The heroes, the excitement that goes along with the game. I tell you, that creates character and values that you all put in us.

It has been greatly -- I am so humbled now I cannot believe it. There are so many people that I need to thank, but it's never been about me. It's been about my teammates. It's been about the coaches. It's been about the mothers, the fathers, the sports writers that make this game so great. That makes us so great. That put us on the pedestal. You know, most of my teammates and you people here think more of me than I do my own self. And you are, indeed, greater than I am because you think so much of me. And I just want to thank everyone here, and I want to thank God, most of all, for having this opportunity to be here and represent. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: 1977 through 1980 at Stanford, wide receiver Ken Margerum was a first team All American who held the Pac 10 record for receiving touchdowns for 26 years. Ken Margerum.

KEN MARGERUM: Thank you very much. As Woodrow just said it properly, it's so humbling. You don't realize what you're part of until you're sitting up here, really. Football's the ultimate team sport, and it's just a privilege to be involved in college football and coaching receivers in college football, it's just an honor and privilege to give back to the game for what it gave to me.

People like Payton Jordan, and the track coach, Bill Walsh, who recognized something special in me in high school. It meant a lot. To be able to compete all those years, it was wonderful.

The ultimate in team sports, it started in 1979 at the Walter Camp banquet, and now we're sitting again up here in 2009, and we were members of that Chicago Bears team.

So just the sport itself and what it gives to you as an individual means a lot. But it's the teammates and the coaches and the families that are really what means most to me. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: 1976 to 1979 at Texas, defensive tackle Steve McMichael was the unanimous first team All American selection in 1979. The Longhorns all-time sack leader, and in tackles as well, Steve McMichael.

STEVE McMICHAEL: Even something that happened this morning. I hear my wife. I was in the bathroom, she goes, Oh, no." I come out and I go, what could go wrong today? I came out and she said she watched some TV. They closed down Canal Street today. So she's probably wearing out my credit card on 5th Avenue, so feel sorry for me about that.

But to be on a more somber note, my freshman year, the first game I started in Lubbock against Texas Tech as defensive end the night my father was killed. Now without the University of Texas becoming my patriarch, I wouldn't be sitting up here today. I promise you that.

These universities that these guys come from are what football is all about. The morality, the fortitude, who you become in your life. All of these guys will tell you that. The thanks goes out to the university, the coaches, the guys they played with the most.

You're not out there playing an 11-man game by yourself, because they can stop you. If you don't have teammates playing with you that are great themselves, you're be going to get any notoriety. And that's who I want to thank is my teammates. The Texas Longhorns. Hook 'em Horns. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: From 1984 to 1987 at Ohio State linebacker, Chris Spielman, was a two-time first team All American. Won the 1987 Lombardi Trophy and holds the school records for unassisted tackles, 283, Chris Spielman.

CHRIS SPIELMAN: Thank you. I'd like to thank the National Football Foundation for this weekend or this week. It's just been amazing. I'd echo the thoughts of everybody here that certainly every guy would tell you that in football you're only

as good as the people around you. And you can accomplish nothing by yourself, and that's why it's the greatest game in the world.

For me it means I get text messages from my ex-teammates and the joy they get out of my honor, which is humbling to no end. And I guess I lost my father last year in October, and he was a high school football coach. That's where my passion for the game comes from. And I know today he's smiling because this is right up his ally. He would absolutely love it.

But the best way to describe it for me is my wife always looked down on individual awards. Whether we were dating in college or whether it was All-America or Lombardi Trophy. She just kind of says, yeah, yeah, whatever.

Even to the point of I was like in the top 250 finalists for the Pro Football Hall of Fame one year. I ran it off on the internet and hung it up on the refrigerator and grabbed her and said, hey, come look at this. She looked at it and she read it. She said, that's great. Can you get it off the kids' artwork?

But this was different. When I shared this with her, there was such a genuine smile on her face and pure joy that she got out of this, because she understood where my passion and what my passion for college football is. It's amazing.

I have no doubt that she's smiling down on us today. I take great solace and joy in that. But football -- nothing can be accomplished without people. And God has given me some ability and blessings through that. I'm humbled and I'm honored. And more importantly I was able to give my wife a genuine joy through football, maybe the first time she ever had it, but she got it. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: From 1982 to 1985 at Iowa, linebacker Larry Station, the two time first team All-America, and two-time academic first team All American. Led the Hawkeyes to the 1985 Big 10 Title and the Rose Bowl, Larry Station.

LARRY STATION: Thank you very much. I'd just like to say I'm very honored as well as humbled to be here. You know, growing up in Omaha, Nebraska, I grew up during the '70s watching the Nebraska-Oklahoma rivalry. Watching great players like Johnny Rodgers, Greg Pruitt, Rich Glover. You know, I just idolized them so much.

Just like some of you here said, you know, this award probably means more to the people who are in our lives and those who watch it than it does

to us. Because when we're playing we're out there doing the best that we can, but, you know, for myself, I remember more so the plays that I wish I could have made than the ones that I did make.

I think that's what pushes us all to become the best and that's why we're here, because we did strive to be better than what most people saw us. We wanted to perfect our craft.

I'd like to thank my parents as well as everybody with the University of Iowa. Even the people that I grew up with on my street back in Omaha, Nebraska. I think they're some of the best football players I've seen never even made it to college football.

A lot of those athletes were there, made some bad choices and went the wrong way, but with the help of our good coaches and teachers and our parents, they kept us on the right path. And that's what brought us here today. And again, I want to thank you very much, and I'm very honored and humbled to be here.

THE MODERATOR: 1982 to 1985 at Georgia Tech, defensive end Pat Swilling, first team All American who led Georgia Tech in all time leader in sacks and tackles, Pat Swilling.

PAT SWILLING: Thank you very much. You know, as I sit here today and listen to all the players, we all echo most of the same things. This is about you and about our families.

Just last night as I sat with my family and my mother -- my father's deceased. He would have loved to have been here and looking down on me. But it's my mother's face and my family's face and how proud they are.

I think everyone in the College Football Hall of Fame, Georgia Tech and Bill Curry and Larry New and John Guy, and the whole family at Georgia Tech, just everyone.

My high school coaches, when I look back and think about Charles Green at Stephens County High School in the small town in Georgia where I'm from, you know, you never, ever think you're going to be sitting here. You always think you have an opportunity to maybe go to college, get a good education and hopefully get a job. But never to sit here in New York City and be inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

So this is an honor for my family, and just everyone that is associated and been a part of my life who has helped me become this for those years. I thank all of you. I thank the sport of football for the opportunity and what it's meant to me, the ability to compete. The ability to go out and strive and be the best person that you can be.

But this honor means so much. I am so thankful for my family, for Georgia Tech and all of our friends. Thank all of you.

THE MODERATOR: From 1989 to 1992 at Miami, quarterback Gino Torretta won the Heisman Trophy in 1992, Davey O'Brien Award, Johnny Unitas and Walter Camp. Led the Hurricanes went to a 26-2 record as a starter, Gino Torretta.

GINO TORRETTA: Thank you. I'd just like to thank the National Football Foundation for this honor. It is humbling to represent the University of Miami as the fourth member of the Hall of Fame.

Like everybody says, you think back to your high school coaches, your Pop Warner coaches, your teammates. And all the guys that made you better as a player and as a person. It's just humbling what the game of football, I think, has done for all of us and given us more opportunities than any of us could ever dream. It's an honor.

I just want to thank the Football Foundation for being able to celebrate this with my family and friends. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: 1979 to 1982 at Penn State, running back Curt Warner was a first team All American who led Penn State. He left there with 42 school records after helping the Nittany Lions to the 1982 national title, Curt Warner.

CURT WARNER: Thank you. I too am honored and humbled to be part of such a prestigious group. I want to thank the NFF for all of their hospitality throughout all of their procedures.

You know, when I look back over my career, it's a humbling time to reflect upon family, friends, teammates, coaches. And I just happen to have one of my teammates out in the audience with you, Todd Blackledge. He was an integral part of us being able to capture that National Championship.

When you think about a coach, you know, I had the honor and the privilege of playing for Coach Paterno. And, you know, people asked me a lot about Paterno. And I said, you know, he's a guy that you learn to like after you get out of Penn State. He's a hard-nosed kind of uncompromising fellow that could be very opinionated at times. Rightfully so.

He brought a lot to the game; and he

continues to do that. And I'm just privileged and proud to be a part of the Penn State family. I too reflect back and think that, you know, a kid from the hills of West Virginia, the coal mining hills of West Virginia would have an opportunity to be part of such a great class. I'm deeply humbled, and deeply honored and proud. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: 1994 to 1997 at Nebraska Grant Wistrom was a member of three national title teams from 1997 Lombardi Trophy recipient, two-time first team unanimous All American selection, and an NFF National Scholar-Athlete, Grant Wistrom.

GRANT WISTROM: First I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the NFF and the college football Hall of Fame. It seems to be a popular phrase up here this afternoon is that we're all very humbled. I don't think any of us ever expected when we were kids playing football that we'd ever be up here in a place like this.

But it is a very humbling experience. When the ballot first came out, my wife looked at it and said do you think this is a possibility? And I said, baby, no. Heisman Trophy winner, Heisman Trophy winner. Curt Warner won the National Championship and guys up here. Just watched them dominate in the NFL for many years.

I said it's awesome. It would be great, but it's just an honor to be nominated. We were sitting around the table one day and a box showed up and my wife unwraps it and pulls out a football and hands me a marker, because he she thought somebody mailed a football to the house to autograph.

And she started reading it, and she said do you know anything about this? And first I thought my brothers were messing with me as they like to do. Then I read it, and got a little bit worked up. Called Chris Anderson who when I was playing Nebraska was the sports information director, and I said is there something you should be telling me? And she said is there something you need to tell me. And I said I don't know. I got this football, what is it about? And obviously, we put two and two together and figured it out.

It's such an amazing experience and honor to be up here. I would just like to say what football means to me. I'm not the world's most gifted athlete. But one of the great things I love about football is anybody that's willing to work hard and be passionate about what they do can be successful at this game. I truly believe that.

There are a few guys that can get away with raw talent. But for the most part it's about who

wants it more and who is willing to work hard for it and sell out and buy into the team concept and buy into the idea that the team is bigger than yourself. Those are the people that have success at this game. One of the things that I truly love about the game of football.

Once again, thank you for this tremendous honor and the fantastic two days we got to spend in New York.

THE MODERATOR: We now turn to our coaches. Coach of Massachusetts and Syracuse, Coach Dick MacPherson. Named national "Coach of the Year" in 1987. Took the Orange to five bowls in ten seasons. Coach Dick MacPherson. Coach?

COACH DICK MacPHERSON: Thank you very much. I just want everybody here to just imagine, is there any football coach in the country no matter what that would dream of being in this seat right here with me, sitting next to John Robinson. Student body right, student body left. And there is just something that is overwhelming to me.

If I'm representing football coaches across America, I do it proudly. I do it just imagining. Right next to him is Archie Manning. I owe a lot to football, but is there anybody who owes a lot more than him? Married the prettiest girl in Mississippi and Louisiana. Look at his two sons he's got. So I'm glad he's here, because he's got a lot to payback to do right now.

Then behind me is Timmy Brown, won the Heisman. I thought Donnie MacPherson should have won it, but I love him now. I really do. And right behind him, Major Harris. I hated him (laughing). And his coach, (indiscernible) and I are great friends and he's in the audience.

And if you want to talk a about a football coach. There are great coaches sitting right down there.

So when everybody here is saying how privileged they are to be here, Curt Warner's talking about Joe Paterno. Curt Warner, any time he had the ball inside the 20-yard line, guaranteed he was going to score. 3rd and 1 he's down in the Carrier Dome on our 1. Here's Mr. Sweetheart over here. My linebacker sticks him like he's never been stuck before. Back on 3rd down and 1. Got one more down. He said, nice tackle, kid. Don't go away, I'll be right back. That's what he said.

So if anybody here misunderstands what a great opportunity it is for anybody to be here, to be

around a bunch of football players and football coaches and people who love football, I'm here. Thank you very much Syracuse, Springfield College, wherever the hell I've been. It's been a run. Thank you very, very much. God love you.

THE MODERATOR: Coach of Southern California and UNLV, John Robinson led USC to the 1978 National Championship, and owns an 8-1 record in Bowl games. The best postseason winning percentage in the NCAA history, Coach John Robinson.

JOHN ROBINSON: Thank you. When the announcement came to my house, my grandson was there. We opened, like everybody, opened the thing. He looked at me kind of strange. He said, Gee, Papa, you must have been okay. You know, that is the nicest thing he's ever said to me.

It is such a great feeling of being okay when you get this. There is such a history in college football. As I look back on my life, my college football coach who was Len Casanova, who is in the Hall of Fame. He not only got me through school, he kept me alive during those days. And I was a lousy player. There was no benefit for him and what he did for me.

My mentor in college football was John McKay, who gave me an opportunity to be on his staff and taught me so much about the game. So I think all of us, when you look back through your years you say, gosh, I owe so much to people that made a difference. And we are all, I think, very grateful for that.

As you look back at these men who have played so well and done so well, you remember things about them watching them TV or playing against them. It just brings back memories that have been dormant for some time.

One of the things I do want to comment on is the local chapters of the Hall of Fame. All of us have gone through our years, the men and women that work in local chapters and make so much contribution to football at the various levels. They always have been impressive people. I really thank them for what they have done for the game.

It's an honor, a privilege to be here, to be included in -- not at the same level -- with the names of the greats that have been mentioned, whether it was Bear Bryant or any of the players, it's just a fabulous feeling. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Going back to the Gold Medal and Distinguished American honorees, they join with seven U.S. Presidents, seven U.S. Generals, three U.S. Admirals, a U.S. Supreme Court Justice, and 32

corporate CEOs, and a select group of men with a strong passion for the game of football. You, too, represent guys who have also gone on to become some of our country's greatest leaders.

Nine Distinguished American recipients, Billy Payne, All American SEC defensive end for the Georgia Bulldogs during the mid to late 1960s, became the driving force behind the bringing of the 1996 Summer Olympics to Atlanta. Today he is chairman of the Augusta National Golf Club, Billy Payne.

BILLY PAYNE: Thank you very much. I would begin by saying how grateful I am to be here in the presence of these gentlemen who have been heros of mine both as coaches and players for so many years.

I'm honored by the National Football Foundation. I am truly delighted to receive this prestigious award. And as I reflect on my own life and career, I think if I learned any lesson in life, one that I'll talk a bit about tonight, it is that hard work and great friends can take you just about anywhere you want to go. Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: 2009 Gold Medal recipient, corecipient of the award with the late Nike Cofounder, Bill Bowerman. Both men established themselves as business revolutionaries and sports marketing pioneers while giving away millions of dollars to support education in college athletics. Representing both men, here's Phil Knight.

PHIL KNIGHT: Thank you. Obviously I had known for decades about the National Football Hall of Fame and about the Gold Medal. I got to feel it in person three years ago when I came back for the dinner when Joe Paterno went into the Hall of Fame, recognizing how special these things are.

The idea that I would win the Gold Medal was just something that never occurred to me until Steve Hatchell called early last summer and said that we had won it. I was absolutely thrilled. It took me about half a second to accept. But honesty dictates that I tell you that Nike has 34,000 employees, and it doesn't do well unless they're all clicking.

When they're working really hard and making things work, they be I get to come and accept an award like this, which I think is absolutely a marvelous thing.

THE MODERATOR: If I might, I'd like to go back and Chris Spielman, you have not only played the game, but you have also commentated.

Tell us what you see in the young men playing college football today and how the game has changed since the time you played and what you see today?

CHRIS SPIELMAN: I see more bad tackling today. I'm sorry, did I say that out loud? I'm sorry.

THE MODERATOR: Now you've become the analyst.

CHRIS SPIELMAN: I see the same emotion and the same passion that when we played. And there is something to be said about playing for your university to me, that is so honorable when you do that. For example, I had the privilege of playing at the Ohio State University. And that responsibility meant that you not only played for your university, your teammates and your coaches. But you played for your state.

Everybody in Ohio is an Ohio State fan. To me that was something that I embraced and went after. I see that in kids today. They play hard. They play for the love of the game. I can honestly say traveling around the country along with Todd and other guys, that what I see is the same passion and the same love of the game that I had and that all of these men have up here.

THE MODERATOR: We'll now take questions from the audience.

Q. Tim, as you have watched the college game and how it's changed, give me your thoughts on what college football looks like today?

TIM BROWN: Well, to me when I see the athletes and you look at the receiver position, it seems to me that the guys are a lot more talented as far as their physical ability. They're bigger, stronger and faster.

I don't know that necessarily means they're better football players, but they're certainly better athletes. When you watch some of the guys do what they do, it's incredible.

You know, if I was playing in that era, I don't know what position I would be playing. I would probably be playing defensive back, because I wouldn't have been big enough to play receiver. These guys are 6'4", 6'5" and very athletic. They look more like basketball players than football players.

To see a guy like Kevin Johnson who is now with Detroit, when you walk up on this kid, he looks like a defensive end. He's out there wearing my number 81 and getting it done. And that's the thing that I say.

I think these kids with all the workout facilities that are around the country where you can start at eight years old and start training your kids to be a great athlete, I do believe that some of the fundamentals of the game are being left behind. You see a lot more injuries now. You see a lot more serious injuries, a lot more concussions because these guys are bigger, faster and stronger, and they don't necessarily have the fundamentals that we had playing the game and knowing how to protect ourselves.

I caught probably 90% of my balls in the middle of the football field and I never got one concussion. Now my brother would say that's because I was scared and I was always getting down. But I would tell you it's because I knew where people were on the field, and I knew where the hits were coming from.

So I would love to see these guys spend a little more time in the film room and a little less time in the weight room.

THE MODERATOR: Grant, if I can come back to you. In a minute we're going to hear from the Scholar Athletes and there are several of you on this panel who were named scholar athletes as well as those now being inducted into the Hall of Fame. Looking back, being named a scholar-athlete, how has that rewarded you in life?

GRANT WISTROM: Just the recognition that comes from it. The honor that you receive. Knowing that the time that you put in the classroom that other people have taken notice of it and you take pride in your work. You start to know that the hard work that you put in behind the scenes does not go unnoticed.

Yeah, it it's great when you get to play in front of 80,000 people on Saturday, but also that the work in the classroom gets rewarded as well. There is nothing like making a sack or catching a touchdown and 80,000 people come to their feet and celebrate with you. But at the same time, much more time is put in the classroom than is ever put in the weight room for college athletes. When you're able to do that and be recognized for it, and not only recognized, but rewarded for it as well is very -- obviously it's a nice gesture on the NFF's part. It goes a long way.

I forget who mentioned earlier they received a \$1,000 scholarship to Tulane. Ed mentioned that earlier. And that goes a long way. It's appreciated. Please keep doing it. The money is greatly appreciated by the kids.

THE MODERATOR: Ed, it's now \$18,000 for a scholarship for a National Scholarship winner. And I know you did say it meant a lot to you.

ED DYAS: The first \$1,000 paid half of the year's tuition. I'd like to rain on the parade a little bit here and talk about football helmets. Y'all notice this year each Game four or five times during the game the football helmet slides off a guy? It just seems to be so much more common now.

Saw some pictures of Paul Horning and Majors in one of the magazine, and neither one had face masks. But Horning had on a leather helmet, and John Majors had one of the original Riddell helmets.

As a physician, understanding the physiology and so forth, doesn't matter what kind of work they do on the helmets to protect you, if it doesn't stay on it's not going to do any good. You can't design it to absorb the lick between the brain and the hard skull. To me the players are bigger, faster and stronger, the licks are being delivered with much more intensity.

I think the only way we can have a solid helmet is you can't design it to get in there and absorb the blow from the brain on the skull. We ought to go back to leather helmets and no face masks. That sounds funny, but it might be the only way out.

THE MODERATOR: Coaches, do you want to give us what you're sharing? Go ahead, John.

JOHN ROBINSON: I just said that's an interesting idea. But there would be a lot of bad looking noses if that were to happen.

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