

Touchdown Club Speech - Rep. G.R. Ford Jr.
Washington, D.C. Jan. 8, 1949.

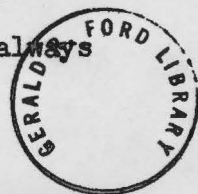
Gentlemen and honored guests:

This is for me one of the most enjoyable occasions you can imagine. Benny Oosterbaan is a close and long-standing friend and to see him rightfully acclaimed on this occasion gives me a real thrill.

Benny Oosterbaan comes from our part of Michigan. He was a great all-around highschool athlete in Muskegon, Michigan. At the University of Michigan he won nine varsity letters, three in football, three in basketball and three in baseball. His feats on the gridiron, the basketball court, and on the diamond are unsurpassed at the University of Michigan. As a highschool student in Grand Rapids at the time Benny was making Ann Arbor history, I admired him as the ultimate in athletes, which he was. I can truthfully state that he was the idol of all of us who were embryonic or would-be college athletes.

My next contact with Benny occurred when I matriculated at the University. He at that time was end coach under Harry Kepke. In short order I learned that his knowledge of the science of football was unlimited. He developed some great ends, such as the late legendary Bill Hewitt of pro-football fame, All-American Ted Petoskey, now a coach at South Carolina, Ivan Williamson, Lafayette's present head coach, and more recent Michigan greats such as Len Ford and Bob Mann. From a player's point of view his scouting technique was something to behold. The success Michigan has had over the years against Minnesota was due in a large measure to Benny's ability to analyze the Gopher powerhouse teams and build an attack and defense against them.

While I was coaching at Yale University Benny and I conferred periodically on scouting methods. It was interesting to note that he was always



seeking new and possibly better methods of doing his job; and I might add that this is why he is receiving this wonderful honor tonight.

As a spectator at Ann Arbor the past three seasons, I have seen Benny Oosterbaan in two of those years as backfield coach develop one of the smoothest and most deceptive backfield combinations in football history. Chappius, Yerges, Elliott and Weisenberger were magicians with the ball. Just ask Southern California--they never saw the ball during the entire game a year ago at the Rose Bowl.

When Fritz Crisler retired to become athletic director after the undefeated and untied 1947 season and Benny was elevated to the position of head coach, many Michigan alumni were somewhat dubious. Hardly an enviable spot with so many Michigan stars graduating. He fielded practically a new team in 1948 and welded them into as fine a team as Michigan ever produced. He took sophomores and left-overs and made them into the number one team for 1948. For this superb and brilliant effort the T.D. Club is honoring my fellow Michigander. I only wish Benny Oosterbaan were here tonight so I could be in the audience paying tribute along with each of you. ~~to each of you who have contributed to the success of our American sports program~~ However, on behalf of a swell guy, an outstanding coach and a real American, I take great pleasure in accepting this trophy.

Had pulling out story.

January 8, 1949

