

The original documents are located in Box D31, folder “Second Annual Awards Dinner, Chapter No. 1, Pittsburgh Chapter, National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame, May 20, 1971” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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~~and members of the board of directors~~

Mr. Daniell, Mr. Benedum, other officers of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame, distinguished guests and friends of football:

It is a great honor for me to ~~be~~ be here ~~tonight~~ tonight. I know I have not been invited to be ~~your~~ your principal speaker because I am an all-American...because I ~~never~~ was accorded that honor. I can only ~~lay~~ lay claim to being one of the orneriest centers who ever passed the ball back to the quarterback of a University of Michigan team.

Tonight I'm not feeling ornery. I'm just happy to be here, and very pleased that you have chosen to hear what I have to say. I love football...I always have from the time I was old enough to tackle anybody. And maybe those are credentials enough.

I played a lot of football as a kid. I was so nuts about the game that I was out pushing somebody around ~~on~~ on ~~a~~ a field when I should have been home eating supper. But I managed to get pretty big anyway--big enough to play for South High School in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Not all of the guys who went out for high school football at South were big, of course. There was one skinny little guy who made up in guts what he lacked in weight. He was so small he got clobbered every ~~time~~ time he got out on the field. ~~The~~ The coach felt sorry for him and one day he said, "Joe, I'm going to let you play end, guard and tackle." Joe was real suprised and said, "Coach, how can I play all three positions?" The coach answered, "I want you to sit on the end of the bench, guard the ~~water~~ water bucket, and tackle anyone who comes near it."

We had some great teams at South High School, but of course it is ~~also~~ ^{also} exciting to play college ball. And so it was a real thrill for me to play ~~center~~ ^{varsity} center for the University of Michigan ~~for~~ for three seasons. Two of those years we ~~were~~ were national champions. The third year, when we lost every game but one, they picked me as Most Valuable Player. That ~~reminds~~ reminds me of the time I was first elected Republican leader of the House of Representatives. I won with the landslide margin of seven votes.

But, seriously, we ~~have~~ have had some great teams at the University of Michigan. The team I never get tired of talking about is the 1948 squad. They beat Southern California in the Rose Bowl 49 to 0. Michigan had a ~~line~~ ^{tremendous} line that year--a real beef trust--and they were all ganging up on ~~the~~ Southern Cal's quarterback. While more than 100,000 people watched, this quarterback tried to sneak through the Michigan line and ~~got~~ buried under a mound of tacklers. When he ~~finally~~ finally staggered to his feet, he looked up at the thousands of people in the stands and said, "I'll be a sonuvagun. How did all those people get back up there to their seats so fast?"

When I finished up at the University of Michigan, I got offers to play professional football from the Detroit Lions and the Green Bay Packers. Maybe the reason I didn't accept is because one day I happened to talk to the wife of a guy who was playing tackle for the Lions. "It's really exciting to be married to a professional football player," she said. "Every time my husband comes home he looks like a different person."

So I'm not sorry I passed up professional football and took a job as assistant varsity coach at Yale while attending law school there. Although, who knows, if I had played pro ball I might have wound up on the Supreme Court, like Whizzer White.

There was one game played in Yale Stadium that I will never forget. It was a cold November day and the stadium was jammed. High up in the stands a Yale alumnus kept standing up and yelling, "Hey, Gus." And every time he did a guy in the third row would stand up and tip his hat. This went on for some time and finally the guy in the third row jumped up and yelled, "Now quit calling me. I'm getting awfully tired of standing up. And besides, my name ain't Gus."

Yes, football is a great game. I really look forward to fall. I've reached that time in my life when I have to watch myself, though. I'm developing television spread.

Football season is a great time of year. It's the only time when a guy can walk down the street with a girl on one arm and a blanket on the other without the tongue of every gossip in town starting to wag.

Now I'm going to quit kidding around and tell you that to share in your annual Awards Dinner is an honor beyond my fondest wish. It is also an honor to be able to stand here and tell you that I think football does more for a young man than any other game I know.

There are those who say football teaches courage and leadership. I don't agree. Football will help a young fellow find out whether he is courageous or has qualities of leadership but it won't give him those qualities.

The football field, in short, is a proving ground. It tells a fellow if he's got the stuff. It has tremendous value in that respect.

Football is, however, a teacher. What it does teach is self-discipline--and this is a most desirable end.

You've heard someone say to someone else who has acted irresponsibly, "Why don't you grow up?" And this is what football helps a young man to do--to acquire a sense of responsibility, a knowledge of the importance of working with others, a real feel for teamwork. In brief, football helps a young man to mature.

Football also imparts a fighting spirit to our young men, a keen feeling of competitiveness. And this is invaluable in the game of life.

I think, too, you will never find an ~~adult~~ American who was worth his salt as ~~a~~ a football player taking the attitude that the world owes him ~~a~~ a living. This is because he learned on the football field that you ~~earn~~ what you get in life or it isn't worth having. And he learns that every time you get knocked down you get up again, if at all possible. ~~Another way of putting it is that~~ Every time ~~he~~ he gets ~~knocked~~ ^{flat} on his face, he gets back up and gets back in the race. And that ~~is~~ is what life is really all about.

We don't have to just guess about ~~the~~ the great benefits of amateur football. There may be many of you who are familiar with the ~~study~~ study made by two San Jose State College professors as the result of a grant from the National Football ~~Foundation~~ Foundation.

That study indicated outstanding success by athletes after graduation from college--not only in terms of income but in terms ~~of~~ of community participation. Case after case showed that ~~those~~ who ~~participated~~ participated in sports and extracurricular campus activities most often exhibited a high degree of social and community responsibility after graduation. These athletes showed a marked ~~tendency~~ tendency to take on leadership responsibilities--whether in the professions, government, education or business.

Now let me address myself to the myth that football players spend so much time on the practice field they don't make very good grades.

A study of every man who played varsity football at Yale from the time the game started there shows that 97 per cent of the football players graduated as against a class average of 85 per cent ~~and~~ the athletes' marks were higher than the ~~average~~ average of their class.

For anyone in the ~~academic~~ academic world to sneer at athletes is the most misguided kind of snobbery.

Let me just add that I think the men who make some of the finest contributions ~~to~~ to our society are those who teach ~~physical~~ physical education. These are men who seek to impart the best possible training to our youngsters--training them ~~not~~ not only in body but in ~~mind~~ mind and spirit.

One of my most pleasurable tasks in recent weeks was to write a letter to the president of a university suggesting that the school's board of trustees name their new health and physical ~~education~~ education building after an outstanding man who had taught ~~physical~~ physical education at the university for some 30 years.

And now I would like to say a word to all of ~~those~~ those who have been honored here tonight. You deserved these honors, or they would not have been presented to you. In football, as in life, you either produce or you don't make it. All of you ~~honored~~ honored tonight have produced. And I am proud to be in your company. We might have called this Outstanding Citizens Night because that ^{is} what you are...outstanding citizens all.

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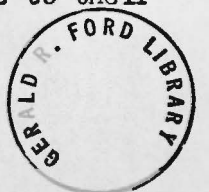
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ROUGH NOTES

PITTSBURGH, PA.

MAY 20, 1971

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Gerald R. Ford
M.C.

THURSDAY

SECOND ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

CHAPTER #1, PITTSBURGH CHAPTER

NATIONAL FOOTBALL FOUNDATION
AND HALL OF FAME

