

The original documents are located in Box D34, folder “Fifteenth Annual Awards Dinner, National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame, New York, NY, December 5, 1972” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. The Council donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Office Copy

REMARKS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER OF THE
NATIONAL FOOTBALL FOUNDATION AND HALL OF FAME

WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

7:00 P.M. TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1972

First let me emphasize how wonderful it is to be among so many distinguished Americans who love football as I do. We come from all kinds of backgrounds and all sorts of careers but we have in common the conviction that you get something out of this great American game besides a trick knee and a scrapbook of yellowed clippings.

In my adult lifetime I've had two great ambitions. One was to be The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the other was to receive your Gold Medal Award. Thank you for making one of my impossible dreams come true. As for the other, there's another playoff--in the Congressional League in 1974.

If I have trouble reading my notes, it's because I'm still blinking in the brilliant light shed by the fourteen superstars who in years past have been similarly honored by the National Football Foundation. And I am doubly proud to share your recognition tonight with my old friend Brud Holland. I used to scout Brud at Cornell when I was an assistant coach at Yale. I knew then that Brud was going places, but I didn't know we'd wind up together at the Waldorf wearing black ties and swapping stories about the days back when the ball was round.

Frankly I haven't been singled out for such attention on account of my football years since President Lyndon Johnson said: Jerry Ford isn't such a bad fellow except he played football too long without a helmet.

Time has mellowed my reaction to that remark. It seems to me that a lump or two on the noggin, with or without a helmet, is the best way I know to turn a highminded kid into a broadminded man.

Since politics is my profession, you probably expect me to say how the lessons I learned from football have helped me along in political competition. Well, first of all, since my contract has just been renewed for only two years, I feel a lot of sympathy for all the coaches present.

When I headed for Ann Arbor in 1931, there wasn't a lot of money lying around and there weren't many jobs either. I could not have gone to Michigan if my old coach Harry Kipke, God rest his soul, hadn't found me a hashing job at the University Hospital in the nurses' cafeteria. I also worked in the interns'



dining room, but what I remember best is the nurses' cafeteria.

I wanted to be a lawyer, but again, I might never have made Law School if Harry Kipke hadn't steered me onto a job as an Assistant Coach at Yale, under Ducky Pond. That was one of the toughest decisions of my life. Yale would pay me \$50 a week and I could study law, but the Green Bay Packers and the Detroit Lions both offered me the fabulous sum of \$200 a game. I chose Yale, and about the same time Whizzer White chose the Pittsburgh Steelers, saved his money and went to Yale Law School after the war. I often wonder, what if we'd switched? I might have a life contract with the Supreme Court, and Whizzer might have to scrimmage for a seat in Congress every two years.

There are plenty of parallels between football and elective politics. You play hard, you play to win, but you don't last long if you don't play clean. You have to train and stay in top condition. Fumbles and lucky breaks you take in stride, and you soon learn that you can't win 'em all. You fight your heart out for 60 minutes--you shake hands--and you get ready for the next game. In both cases you have too many Monday morning quarterbacks.

But I think the biggest carryover from the gridiron to government--or any other competitive career--is the concept of teamwork. There never was a football star so brilliant that he could shine alone without 10 other guys whose names are now forgotten. And, if you take a close look at history, this is also true of our greatest political leaders. They have been stellar players, but even more they have been great captains of great teams.

We often wonder why American football is so uniquely American, why it has not been much of an export item, why it has not caught on in other lands like baseball or basketball or even pingpong. Maybe for the same reason the American system of two-party government and free elections has not been universally successful overseas. Both reflect unique qualities in the American character--rough, tough, total competition within well-defined rules; rugged individualism tempered by team spirit and sacrifice; self-discipline that doesn't degenerate into blind obedience; willingness to accept the final score when the gun goes off or the last ballot is counted.

Teamwork is not instinctive to man. It must be painfully learned. It demands followership as well as leadership, benchwarming as well as grandstanding. Where is teamwork taught better than on the Gridiron? Teamwork is the priceless ingredient of individual success and of the civilized society which the

National Football Foundation nurtures and advances. Aside from the service of God and defending our country, I can't think of many nobler objectives.

Many traditional values and old-fashioned virtues are under attack today, and those who stand up for them are sneered and scoffed at. But I don't believe everything I see on television, or read in the Wall Street Journal. We gave the vote to the 18-year-olds and the election returns certainly don't show that our offspring went trooping off after the Pied Pipers of pacifism, protest and pot.

The few games I've seen this season don't convince me that football is a dying sport. With a handful of noisy exceptions, the generation of Americans coming up and taking over is a great generation. They will make this country even greater as it starts its third century of independence.

But make no mistake, the new generation of Americans is going to face tough competition in this wicked world. Even if we escape the calamity of major wars, America is certain to be challenged as never before. We are confronted by enormous and complex problems at home and abroad. We must toughen our society and toughen ourselves; recover some of the teamwork and muscle that tamed the American wilderness; revitalize our sense of national unity and national purpose.

Last summer I visited Mainland China, seeing a totally different civilization and political system, hidden from Americans for a quarter century. It was a fascinating experience, and in some ways a frightening one. Imagine 800 million people, growing at the rate of two New York Cities per year, trying with incredible dedication and discipline to construct a new kind of society--a society that works and thinks and acts according to the sayings of Chairman Mao.

The Chinese call their goal communism and their system Marxist, but it is vastly different from the Russian and European experiments we have seen evolving. One of China's most impressive accomplishments has been in the field of public health and physical fitness. Cleanliness is a national passion--old China hands simply cannot believe that in two weeks and thousands of miles our party saw only two flies and no mosquitoes. The Chinese people, particularly the youngsters, appear to be adequately fed, healthy, hard-working and content.

There is no free competition in the marketplace, of course, but the Chinese carefully cultivate the competitive spirit in their collective system. Teams on the farm and in the factories compete against one another. And as the world knows from their pingpong prowess, China's leaders are pushing competitive

sports in every corner of the land. Not yet football. But would you believe basketball? I saw more basketball courts driving thru China than one sees in America--and I saw three-year-old boys in nursery school playing with miniature baskets and a smaller ball, playing I might say with more spirit than skill. But this should be a warning. Out of 800 million people Chairman Mao will find enough Chinese Wilt Chamberlain's to field a dozen championship teams.

What does Oriental basketball have to do with American football? Just this. If we are to realize a generation of peace, as we pray, we will still need teamwork and discipline and physical stamina to survive the peaceful competition of the future. No soft, flabby, drug-poisoned, luxury-loaded, lazy, licentious nation has ever survived.

The whole course of history is one of human societies striving to find the right mix of apparently contradictory ideals--on the one hand, discipline and dedication; on the other, individuality and freedom.

Whenever any society goes too far in either direction it is in trouble. Too much discipline leads to despotism that corrupts and corrodes the human spirit. Too much individuality and freedom brings disorder and anarchy and chaos, from which a strong man eventually arises. Both extremes come to the same end. What is the middle road? It is something like the spirit of teamwork that football develops. So if the fate of Europe was once decided on the playing fields of Eton, perhaps it is fair to say the fate of America may be determined in the football stadiums of Michigan, Ohio State and Stanford; Notre Dame, Southern Methodist, Yale and, yes, Whittier College.

Speaking of Whittier College, let me pay homage to the unknown soldiers of the gridiron, the subs and the scrubs. Bruised and battered on the practice field, on the big day they hunker down in their blankets, cheering and comforting their teammates and dreaming of the big moment when the coach beckons. I spent two years mostly warming the bench, but I've learned from these dinners I had good company, such as Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Who is to say the benchwarmers aren't part of the team? They are more, they are the very heart of the team. Let's all salute the benchwarmers of America, who have nothing to lose but their blankets. Your Gold Medal Award honors them as much as it honors me.

For this wonderful symbol of your friendship and esteem, all I can really say is thank you very, very much.

#

REMARKS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER OF THE
NATIONAL FOOTBALL FOUNDATION AND HALL OF FAME

WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

7:00 P.M. TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1972

First let me emphasize how wonderful it is to be among so many distinguished Americans who love football as I do. We come from all kinds of backgrounds and all sorts of careers but we have in common the conviction that you get something out of this great American game besides a trick knee and a scrapbook of yellowed clippings.

In my adult lifetime I've had two great ambitions. One was to be The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the other was to receive your Gold Medal Award. Thank you for making one of my impossible dreams come true. As for the other, there's another playoff--in the Congressional League in 1974.

If I have trouble reading my notes, it's because I'm still blinking in the brilliant light shed by the fourteen superstars who in years past have been similarly honored by the National Football Foundation. And I am doubly proud to share your recognition tonight with my old friend Brud Holland. I used to scout Brud at Cornell when I was an assistant coach at Yale. I knew then that Brud was going places, but I didn't know we'd wind up together at the Waldorf wearing black ties and swapping stories about the days back when the ball was round.

Frankly I haven't been singled out for such attention on account of my football years since President Lyndon Johnson said: Jerry Ford isn't such a bad fellow except he played football too long without a helmet.

Time has mellowed my reaction to that remark. It seems to me that a lump or two on the noggin, with or without a helmet, is the best way I know to turn a highminded kid into a broadminded man.

Since politics is my profession, you probably expect me to say how the lessons I learned from football have helped me along in political competition. Well, first of all, since my contract has just been renewed for only two years, I feel a lot of sympathy for all the coaches present.

When I headed for Ann Arbor in 1931, there wasn't a lot of money lying around and there weren't many jobs either. I could not have gone to Michigan if my old coach Harry Kipke, God rest his soul, hadn't found me a hashing job at the University Hospital in the nurses' cafeteria. I also worked in the interns'

dining room, but what I remember best is the nurses' cafeteria.

I wanted to be a lawyer, but again, I might never have made Law School if Harry Kipke hadn't steered me onto a job as an Assistant Coach at Yale, under Ducky Pond. That was one of the toughest decisions of my life. Yale would pay me \$50 a week and I could study law, but the Green Bay Packers and the Detroit Lions both offered me the fabulous sum of \$200 a game. I chose Yale, and about the same time Whizzer White chose the Pittsburgh Steelers, saved his money and went to Yale Law School after the war. I often wonder, what if we'd switched? I might have a life contract with the Supreme Court, and Whizzer might have to scrimmage for a seat in Congress every two years.

There are plenty of parallels between football and elective politics. You play hard, you play to win, but you don't last long if you don't play clean. You have to train and stay in top condition. Fumbles and lucky breaks you take in stride, and you soon learn that you can't win 'em all. You fight your heart out for 60 minutes--you shake hands--and you get ready for the next game. In both cases you have too many Monday morning quarterbacks.

But I think the biggest carryover from the gridiron to government--or any other competitive career--is the concept of teamwork. There never was a football star so brilliant that he could shine alone without 10 other guys whose names are now forgotten. And, if you take a close look at history, this is also true of our greatest political leaders. They have been stellar players, but even more they have been great captains of great teams.

We often wonder why American football is so uniquely American, why it has not been much of an export item, why it has not caught on in other lands like baseball or basketball or even pingpong. Maybe for the same reason the American system of two-party government and free elections has not been universally successful overseas. Both reflect unique qualities in the American character--rough, tough, total competition within well-defined rules; rugged individualism tempered by team spirit and sacrifice; self-discipline that doesn't degenerate into blind obedience; willingness to accept the final score when the gun goes off or the last ballot is counted.

Teamwork is not instinctive to man. It must be painfully learned. It demands followership as well as leadership, benchwarming as well as grandstanding. Where is teamwork taught better than on the Gridiron? Teamwork is the priceless ingredient of individual success and of the civilized society which the

National Football Foundation nurtures and advances. Aside from the service of God and defending our country, I can't think of many nobler objectives.

Many traditional values and old-fashioned virtues are under attack today, and those who stand up for them are sneered and scoffed at. But I don't believe everything I see on television, or read in the Wall Street Journal. We gave the vote to the 18-year-olds and the election returns certainly don't show that our offspring went trooping off after the Pied Pipers of pacifism, protest and pot.

The few games I've seen this season don't convince me that football is a dying sport. With a handful of noisy exceptions, the generation of Americans coming up and taking over is a great generation. They will make this country even greater as it starts its third century of independence.

But make no mistake, the new generation of Americans is going to face tough competition in this wicked world. Even if we escape the calamity of major wars, America is certain to be challenged as never before. We are confronted by enormous and complex problems at home and abroad. We must toughen our society and toughen ourselves; recover some of the teamwork and muscle that tamed the American wilderness; revitalize our sense of national unity and national purpose.

Last summer I visited Mainland China, seeing a totally different civilization and political system, hidden from Americans for a quarter century. It was a fascinating experience, and in some ways a frightening one. Imagine 800 million people, growing at the rate of two New York Cities per year, trying with incredible dedication and discipline to construct a new kind of society-- a society that works and thinks and acts according to the sayings of Chairman Mao.

The Chinese call their goal communism and their system Marxist, but it is vastly different from the Russian and European experiments we have seen evolving. One of China's most impressive accomplishments has been in the field of public health and physical fitness. Cleanliness is a national passion--old China hands simply cannot believe that in two weeks and thousands of miles our party saw only two flies and no mosquitoes. The Chinese people, particularly the youngsters, appear to be adequately fed, healthy, hard-working and content.

There is no free competition in the marketplace, of course, but the Chinese carefully cultivate the competitive spirit in their collective system. Teams on the farm and in the factories compete against one another. And as the world knows from their pingpong prowess, China's leaders are pushing competitive

sports in every corner of the land. Not yet football. But would you believe basketball? I saw more basketball courts driving thru China than one sees in America--and I saw three-year-old boys in nursery school playing with miniature baskets and a smaller ball, playing I might say with more spirit than skill. But this should be a warning. Out of 800 million people Chairman Mao will find enough Chinese Wilt Chamberlain's to field a dozen championship teams.

What does Oriental basketball have to do with American football? Just this. If we are to realize a generation of peace, as we pray, we will still need teamwork and discipline and physical stamina to survive the peaceful competition of the future. No soft, flabby, drug-poisoned, luxury-loaded, lazy, licentious nation has ever survived.

The whole course of history is one of human societies striving to find the right mix of apparently contradictory ideals--on the one hand, discipline and dedication; on the other, individuality and freedom.

Whenever any society goes too far in either direction it is in trouble. Too much discipline leads to despotism that corrupts and corrodes the human spirit. Too much individuality and freedom brings disorder and anarchy and chaos, from which a strong man eventually arises. Both extremes come to the same end. What is the middle road? It is something like the spirit of teamwork that football develops. So if the fate of Europe was once decided on the playing fields of Eton, perhaps it is fair to say the fate of America may be determined in the football stadiums of Michigan, Ohio State and Stanford; Notre Dame, Southern Methodist, Yale and, yes, Whittier College.

Speaking of Whittier College, let me pay homage to the unknown soldiers of the gridiron, the subs and the scrubs. Bruised and battered on the practice field, on the big day they hunker down in their blankets, cheering and comforting their teammates and dreaming of the big moment when the coach beckons. I spent two years mostly warming the bench, but I've learned from these dinners I had good company, such as Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Who is to say the benchwarmers aren't part of the team? They are more, they are the very heart of the team. Let's all salute the benchwarmers of America, who have nothing to lose but their blankets. Your Gold Medal Award honors them as much as it honors me.

For this wonderful symbol of your friendship and esteem, all I can really say is thank you very, very much.

#