

Football Building Kickoff

We all have our own images of the University...

and its traditions...

Importance of Football at Michigan

You know, Michigan football is one of the great traditions
that make our institution the place it is...

Those spectacular fall days...

the fans walking down through the falling leaves to
fill a stadium with crowds over 105,000...

...the bands, the cheerleaders, the pageantry...

And, of course, the exhilaration of that spectacular
Rose Bowl victory still fresh in our minds...

We are intensely proud of our athletic teams...

...as one of my Deans puts it, he just wants to build
a Medical School our Football Team can be proud of...

Michigan is unique in its combination of
world-class academic programs...and its
winning tradition in athletics...

...If you compare the two top ten lists...

the top ten universities in academic quality...

and the top ten athletic programs in football...

You will find only one name on both lists...Michigan.

Yet, as important as winning is, we are also
proud of our programs for their integrity...their class.

And of course, we have long taken great pride in
having many of the nation's leading coaches...
including its leading football coach...

But perhaps of most importance of all is the way
in which Bo and his coaches dedicate themselves
first and foremost to the education of the
student-athletes who don the maize and blue.

Michigan belief

Athletic competition can play an important role
in our fundamental mission: education

I suppose it is something in the very nature of a university
that causes us to continually ask the questions about
our values, our goals, our priorities...

What are we?...what do we strive to become?...

Interestingly enough, I suspect that if one were to go through
one of Bo's talks to his team with a highlighter, you would
get some pretty good ideas...

Words...

Pride...in institutions and in one's self

Sacrifice for others...for the team

Dedication to the achievement of excellence

A disdain for mediocrity

Courage, confidence,...

Leadership...

Integrity, honesty,

Quality, Class....

It is certainly true that intercollegiate athletics can provide
students with a marvelous opportunity to develop those
qualities so important in later life...particularly when led
by inspiring and enlightened coaches such as Bo Schlembecher

But it can do more, for these programs also serve as models
not simply for the university community, but for many others
throughout their society...

How many youngsters dream of the day they could play in the
Rose Bowl...and learn from others the qualities necessary
to get there?

And how many of us as adults tend to identify with these teams

...sharing their thrill in victory...and suffering with them through defeat.

Football...indeed, all intercollegiate athletics...is a game, to be sure... but it is also a remarkable model of life...and those factors which lead to a program's long term success are also the factors which prepare young men and women for life itself!

While it is important that we always keep it in perspective...that we always place primary emphasis on the first word in "student-athlete"... it is also important that we acknowledge that the lessons that Coach Schembechler and his colleagues teach to the young men who don the maize and blue of Michigan are some of the most important lessons of life...lessons every bit as important as those we teach in the classroom or laboratory...

The role of intercollegiate athletics

We understand the dedication and commitment required to balance the demands of intercollegiate athletics with the demands of a Michigan education.

A Michigan education is challenging enough, without the additional pressures of participation in one of the nation's leading athletic programs.

But, I suspect that later in life most of our athletics look back upon their experience at Michigan as providing an extraordinary education, in the most complete sense of the word.

It has sometimes been said that the purpose of a college education is to learn the art of life... And in this, we believe our student athletes have a certain edge, since they benefit from a full-range of experiences on our campus, from the intellectual to the athletic to the cultural...

Hall of Champions

Michigan has much to be proud of in its programs in intercollegiate athletics

While the key factor in the Michigan tradition involves the abilities, efforts, and dedication of the student-athletes, the coaches and staff, and all of those who support these programs,

It is also the case that excellence in athletics, like excellence in other academic endeavor, require the necessary facilities.

And here we have faced a particular challenge in recent years since we simply have not been able to keep up with other institutions in the quality of facilities we have been able to provide our programs.

The Center of Champions we are launching this evening is aimed at correcting that situation.

It is aimed at providing all of our sports programs with the support they need to achieve excellence... in the Michigan tradition... within the rules...

...with the concern for our student-athletes foremost

This is a very important project for us, and we seek your strong support.

There is already strong momentum, but much more is needed.

Those of you in this room this evening will be the key to this effort.

Let me thank those of you who have already made your

commitments...and encourage those others here this evening on whom the success of this project depends.