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 pagentry...
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 intregity...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 Schlemmecher.
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 maize and blue of Michigan are some of the most important lessons of life...lessons everything 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 compete 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-athletics 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.