

Heisman Dinner (12/18/91)

On behalf of the University of Michigan

I am proud and honored to be here tonight

to join you in celebrating the talent and achievements
of this year's Heisman Trophy winner, Desmond Howard.

Michigan has had quite a wait between Heisman winners---

--51 years to be exact--

Of course, I am thrilled that this honor

has come to us once again during my watch.

One thing is for sure,

However long the wait

when Michigan gives you a winner,
he is a truly great winner !

Our first Heisman awardee was two time

All-American Tom Harmon back in 1940.

And tonight we honor Desmond Howard.

Harmon and Howard--outstanding athletes and outstanding men.

On the surface, you might think these two

don't have much in common.

Different generations, different backgrounds and experiences,

Harmon over six feet and 200 pounds,
Howard of relatively small build
even the game of football
they played so brilliantly is different.

But I think in the important things they have much in common.

Each in his own way represents the best of Michigan.

Each exemplifies in his achievements and character the values

that our University has stood for for 175 years.

Each man a Student Athlete--

For them playing football, however valuable,
seen as a means to an end--education--
and not an end in itself.

Each a man of indomitable spirit, determination,

and dedication on the playing field
.....and also in the classroom.

Each rooted in the midwest and its rock solid values

Each aspiring to excellence in athletics and life.

Each player strongly formed

in the Michigan tradition of teamwork and loyalty.

Each a man of character and conviction

Each backed by strong and loving families

Harmon built a house for his parents in Ann Arbor that still stands
Howard's folks are at every game,
united in their pride and caring for their son

Each honorable, solid, centered men, wholly without pretension.

Each hard working, willing to do whatever necessary to excel

Each recognized for decency and simple kindness.

Each one caring men, committed to serve others

Harmon a wounded soldier and decorated hero in WWII.
Desmond Howard reaching out to the less fortunate,
visiting young men in prison,
conscious of the good he can do as a role model for young people--
And, if you happened to be outside Michigan Stadium this year
up to three hours after a game,
you would have seen Desmond Howard surrounded by kids
patiently signing autographs until

the very last one goes away satisfied.

Each superb athlete of awesome grace and power,

and in Desmond's case an absolutely unearthly ability
to soar in search of the ball.

Football in Tom Harmon's era was a very different game, though.

No coast to coast tv, no culture of celebrity,
no specialty teams, real grass.

Desmond Howard is used to being seen around the world on TV.

He has faced the pressures of mounting celebrity

In an era of specialists in football

he has had to be the best of the best.

Nowadays college sports can be full of
much greater pressures and temptations

But like Tom Harmon, Desmond Howard has managed to stay

a student first and true to himself

and to the highest expectations of Michigan .

You all know that Michigan is a tough competitor

in all the major intercollegiate sports.

But our main claim to attention

is as one of the world's leading centers of learning.

Our students come from every state and just about every nation

We get the cream of the intellectual crop.

And the same spirit that produces winners on the playing field,

also educates leaders in our classrooms

produces cutting edge research that saves lives,

produces jobs, improves the environment.

At Michigan it isn't so much winning itself that is the goal

it is going all out, doing the best you can do,

setting your goals high and developing
and using your talents and skills
to make the world a better place.

...On the other hand--it is nice to win, too.

Although our main competitors

are the great private schools of the East,

Michigan is truly defined by its public character

committed to academic excellence to serve the public good.

We have always represented educational opportunity

for all those with the ability and will to succeed.

Many of our students are, like Desmond Howard, the first in their

family to earn a college degree.

In the words of one of our early presidents

our University was founded

to provide an uncommon education for the common man.

In our midwestern way, we like to think of ourselves as a family

370,000 living alumni who are in every corner of the globe

50,000 students

3,400 faculty

20,000 employees

It's a mighty big family

But a closeknit family nonetheless.

And one of the things that holds us together

are those games

on crisp Saturday afternoons in the fall.

106,000 in the Stadium unfailingly week after week

and all the rest tuned in wherever they are.

The team this year has given us all so many thrills

so many moments of excellence and high drama

We will always remember and celebrate them.

And, as you have now certified,

Desmond Howard has stood out from the rest
a symbol of the best of the college game
and the best of Michigan.

I'll let the Coach talk about the football.

It has been "Magic".

But equally magical for the Michigan family fans

is the wonder of Desmond Howard, himself--
his character, values, personality
--his wonderful example to the young people of America.

He has united all of us in pride in his accomplishments.

We are basking in his reflected glory tonight .

He has fully earned this honor and the fame it brings

and I think you can count on him to use them to help others.

I want to thank Desmond Howard

for all his contributions to Michigan.

Express our gratitude to his Father and Mother

recognize them for the sacrifices
and commitment of fine parents
and for sending us this wonderful son.

Thank our Coaches,

Gary Moeller and before him,
Bo Schembechler and their colleagues in Athletics--
I often tell people very sincerely that I think our coaches
are some of the best teachers we have
and they know we back them when they put academics first.

Express our gratitude to the whole team

for playing so hard and well--every one a star in his own right.

Desmond's Father, J. D. Howard, is quoted

in Sports Illustrated as saying:

"You make this whole family feel good. Just the idea of you."

I think that sums up the feelings of the entire Michigan family.

Congratulations, Desmond.

We will always remember and be proud of you.

Now on to the Roses in Pasadena.

Thank you very much.

Go Blue!