

**1-800-GIVE LIFE (1-800-448-3543):  
Call the American Red Cross**

With this issue, we officially kick off an FWAA program to encourage our members to give blood to the Red Cross.

Dave Sittler, FWAA president, explores the reasons and how to donate blood in his column on Page 2. Dave, executive director Steve Richardson and other FWAA members believe strongly this is a way we can help the country in a time of need.

What it entails from members is a small price (approximately two hours out of one's day every 56 days) to pay for what could save lives. The events of Sept. 11 made everyone keenly aware of the disasters that could strike. But the American Red Cross always needs blood donations because supplies often run low. While some members may not be able to give blood, they can contribute financially to the Red Cross.

In this issue of *The Fifth Down*, we also examine the top candidates for the Bronko Nagurski Trophy (Best Defensive Player) and Outland Trophy (Best Interior Lineman on offense or defense)

on Page 4. There is a ballot to select the FWAA's All-America team on Page 5. Even if you can't fill out the entire team, fax or e-mail nominations to the person on the committee representing the league you cover. The FWAA All-America committee will conduct conference calls on Nov. 20 and Nov. 27 to select the team and major award winners.

We also have included in this issue a few topical pieces written by or about FWAA members. Colorado sports information director Dave Plati, an FWAA member, recently came under fire — and we believe unfairly so — at his school. There's also a piece by Bud Withers of the *Seattle Times* that we can all relate to during our past daily coverage. And finally, the FWAA gives a word of thanks (Page 6) to those involved in greatly improving the postgame interview procedures and conditions at the Oklahoma-Texas game.

**Steve Richardson  
FWAA Executive Director**



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# President's column



## DAVE SITTLER

We need to call a timeout from the fun and football games we cover to discuss a topic much more serious than issues such as a lack of telephones and electrical outlets in the press box, cranky coaches and interview access.

Those and other problems we deal with in our business haven't seemed as paramount since the Sept. 11 terrorist at-

tacks in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.

Granted, finding an available phone line can still seem like a life-and-death situation when it's 10:29 p.m. and you have a 10:30 deadline. And the FWAA hasn't abandoned its mission to assist its members when it comes to improving working conditions.

But this month the FWAA is asking for your help and answers to this question: What can our organization do to help our nation during these difficult times?

Before Sept. 11, I thought I was going to lose my lunch if I heard one more person in the sports world talk about "giving something back" to his or her school or community. I was weary of those words often being little more than lip service. But now that cliché can't be used enough as all of us search for ways to help the United States rebound from this tragedy.

Executive director Steve Richardson, who is always there when our group has problems and needs solutions, has come through again. Steve has suggested a dynamic way the FWAA can have an impact: Give blood.

Steve has been a longtime blood donor. And I would like to share with you a portion of a letter he received recently from the American Red Cross concerning the impact people can have by donating a few minutes of their time and a pint of their blood.

"If you rescued a child from a burning building, you'd be featured on the evening news. If you saved a life in combat, you'd receive a Silver Star and come home to a ticker-tape parade. And although your recent donation of blood didn't make the local news, or even prompt a parade, it's every bit as heroic. Maybe more so.

"Think about it. Most people go through their entire lives without saving one life. You may have saved three lives with EVERY pint you donated. Heroic? No question about it."

We save three lives with one pint? Think about that for a minute.

Perhaps many of you were among the thousands who responded shortly after the attacks. Many of our newspapers carried stories that reported the response was so great that many potential donors were turned away.

Unfortunately, many of those people did not return. And now the country is once again facing a shortage because blood has a shelf life of only 42 days.

For those of you who did give blood in the days after Sept. 11, the Red Cross reminds you that you can do it every 56 days. So please consider being a repeat donor.

If you have never donated blood and have questions about the process, you can call the Red Cross at 1-800-448-3543 or visit their website: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

Trust me, I understand if you are hesitant to get involved because you get squeamish at the very sight of blood and needles. I felt the same way the first time I walked into a donation center more than 30 years ago. But the process did turn out to be painless and incredibly gratifying.

My problem is that, unlike Steve Richardson, I haven't returned much over the 30-year span. Until now.

I hope you also will decide to take part. With more than 1,000 members, the FWAA could have a dramatic impact if we unite behind this cause as our way of giving back to the country that allows us the freedom and opportunity to write about our nation's fun and games.

# Colorado SID seems to be fall guy in rift between coach, running back

*Note: Colorado Sports Information Director Dave Plati was reprimanded by school officials earlier this season. The following is one of the stories by the Denver media about the situation.*

**By Dave Krieger  
Rocky Mountain News  
Sept. 8, 2001**

I hesitate to probe the deepening fissure between Marcus Houston and the University of Colorado football program before checking with CU's Arbiter of Reality, Dick Tharp, because a good arbiter of reality is harder to find than an honest football coach.

Caesar was one — an arbiter of reality, I mean. I don't think he coached football, although I get him mixed up with Vince Lombardi sometimes. And Stalin, of course. And even Stanley Kubrick, although I'm guessing Tharp would deride Kubrick's conclusions as mere perception, which is to say they differ from Tharp's.

But I'm going to take my chances because one man's reality is another man's misperception, as any beginning philosophy student at Tharp's institution could tell him. I believe Picasso established this some time ago, though he might have stolen the idea from Descartes.

Tharp's imperial decree on the subject was issued for the apparent purpose of loading the entire unhappy episode on the shoulders of his sports information director, Dave Plati, whom Tharp found guilty of failing to distinguish between perception and reality in the Houston matter.

Plati had suggested CU coaches were trying to teach Houston a lesson when they did not permit him to suit up for the opener against Fresno State. Head coach Gary Barnett denied it, which was good enough for Tharp, who ordered Plati suspended without pay for giving voice to erroneous perception.

Evidently, Tharp believes running backs coach Eric Bieniemy's unfortunate habit of calling Houston by a girl's name is more perception. Barnett insists "Markeesha" is just a friendly nickname, like Bieniemy's players calling him "E.B." If this is true, Barnett should have no objection to "Coach Bonehead."

Do you happen to recall what happened when talk show host Jim Rome called former NFL quarterback Jim Everett "Chris," as in Chris Evert? Let me refresh your memory: Everett leaped across the table separating them, on the air, to pummel Rome. Then there was the day Tony Battie's NBA career headed downhill, when other players began referring to him as Toni Braxton.

Trust me, in the macho culture of American jockdom,

gender jokes are no joke.

About the only thing that seems clear is Tharp and Barnett are engaged in a stunningly unsuccessful attempt to cover up the source of the problem, which is well known around the program: Houston and his position coach don't get along.

Bieniemy wants Houston to tough it out through practice with his pulled groin muscle. Houston doesn't think that's the way to get well.

In short, it looks like Plati was disciplined for telling the truth and Tharp and Barnett are lying, either to us or to themselves. It doesn't really matter which.

Neither, it seems safe to say, has ever dealt with anyone like Houston. He's smarter than both of them, maybe put together. He's outspoken and willing to take on authority, as he proved as a party to a lawsuit against the Denver Police Department as a high school student. Coaches generally prefer players who shut up and do what they're told.

When it comes to the issue itself, Houston is playing it smart. Bieniemy is typecast in the role of the Neanderthal. A pulled groin muscle, like a pulled hamstring, can be aggravated with a single wrong step. Once aggravated, it can linger all season.

It is not uncommon for professional players with such injuries to be held out of practice but deployed in games so as to risk re-injury only when it matters.

Still, Bieniemy took a common tack. Denver Broncos running backs coach Bobby Turner took roughly the same position when Terrell Davis said he was hurt last season but doctors couldn't find anything wrong. This is all human nature: The player knows he's hurt; the coach wants to convince him he can practice or play anyway.

The Davis deal was difficult enough for the Broncos without piling a scapegoat and a cover-up on top of it, which is what CU has done.

The problem here is the relationship between Houston and Bieniemy, pure and simple. If Barnett is truly unaware any such problem exists, he is hopelessly out of touch with his own program and his housing allowance should be applied to a cozy condo in a retirement home.

If CU continues to insist Plati is out of touch with reality, it will not only give Plati legitimate grounds for redress, it will fail to address the ongoing problem.

Barnett, curiously, sounds more fearful of alienating Bieniemy than Houston. This just in: Position coaches are easier to find than stud running backs.

The bottom line is a staff problem for a head coach to solve. Of course, he might have to clue in CU's Arbiter of Reality before he can do it.

# Outland Trophy Watch List

The following players are considered the top candidates to win the 2001 Outland Trophy, which is presented to the top interior lineman in college football by the FWAA.

Tennessee's senior defensive tackle John Henderson will try to become the second two-time winner of the award, which has been presented since 1946.

The winner will be announced Dec. 6 on the ESPN College Football Awards Show from Orlando, Fla. Three finalists will be selected by the FWAA All-America Committee in late November and will appear in Orlando on the television show.

The winner will receive his trophy during a banquet on Jan. 10 in Omaha, Neb.



**Toniu Fonoti**

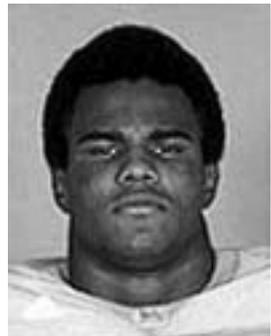
Pos.	Player	School	Pos.	Player	School	Pos.	Player	School
NT	Larry Triplett	Washington	OT	Mike Pearson	Florida	OT	Steve Sciuлло	Marshall
C	Chris Gibson	Oregon State	OT	Terrence Metcalf	Mississippi	OT	Brett Williams	Florida State
C	Scott Peters	Arizona State	OT	Jon Stinchcomb	Georgia	C	Kyle Young	Clemson
DT	Wendell Bryant	Wisconsin	OT	Kendall Simmons	Auburn	OT	Doug Kaufusi	Utah
C	LeCharles Bentley	Ohio State	OT	Konrad Dean	Akron	OT	Ben Archibald	BYU
OT	Mike Williams	Texas	OT	Frank Romero	Oklahoma	DT	Alan Harper	Fresno State
OG	Toniu Fonoti	Nebraska	OT	Joaquin Gonzalez	Miami (Fla.)	OG	Vince Manuwai	Hawaii
OG	Andre Goode	Colorado	OT	Bryant McKinnie	Miami (Fla.)	DT	John Henderson	Tennessee
C	Seth McKinney	Texas A&M	DT	David Pugh	Virginia Tech	OG	Vince Manuwai	Hawaii

# Bronko Nagurski Watch List

The FWAA and Charlotte Touchdown Club will present the Bronko Nagurski Trophy to the best defensive player in the country at banquet on Dec. 10 at the Adams Mark Hotel in Charlotte.

The FWAA will select five finalists for the Bronko Nagurski Trophy in late November. Those five finalists will be invited to Charlotte for the banquet and announcement of the winner.

The following are players on the Bronko Nagurski Watch List:



**Kenyon Coleman**

Pos.	Player	School	Pos.	Player	School	Pos.	Player	School
SS	Roy Williams	Oklahoma	DE	Alex Brown	Florida	DB	Bob Sanders	Iowa
LB	Kalimba Edwards	South Carolina	LB	Levar Fisher	N.C. State	E	Dwight Freeney	Syracuse
LB	Billy Silva	Northwestern	DT	Larry Triplett	Washington	DT	Wendell Bryant	Wisconsin
LB	Scotty Brown	Middle Tennessee	LB	Rocky Calmus	Oklahoma	SS	Mike Doss	Ohio State
CB	Rashad Bauman	Oregon	DT	John Henderson	Tennessee	DE	Julius Peppers	North Carolina
LB	Robert Thomas	UCLA	S	Edward Reed	Miami	LB	Ben Taylor	Virginia Tech
LB	Josh Thornhill	Michigan State	DB	Michael Lewis	Colorado	LB	James King	Central Florida
DE	Kenyon Coleman	UCLA	LB	Dan Dawson	Rice	LB	E.J. Henderson	Maryland

# THE FIFTH DOWN



Use the ballot at the bottom of this page to nominate players for the FWA All-America Team. Forward your nominations to the FWA All-America Committee member assigned to the league you cover. The committee will conduct conference calls on Nov. 20 and Nov. 27 to select the team and major award winners.

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## FWAA ALL-AMERICA BALLOT

OFFENSE			DEFENSE		
Position	Player	School	Position	Player	School
Wide Receiver			End		
Wide Receiver			Tackle		
Lineman			Tackle		
Lineman			End		
Center			Linebacker		
Lineman			Linebacker		
Lineman			Linebacker		
Tight End			Back		
Running back			Back		
Running back			Back		
Quarterback			Back		
Place kicker			Punter		
Kicker returner					

## FWAA commends those involved in improving OU-Texas postgame

**To:** Parties Involved in OU-Texas postgame press operations at Cotton Bowl (FWAA members Charlie Fiss, Rick Baker, John Bianco, Scott McConnell, Kenny Mossman)

**From:** FWAA President Dave Sitter, FWAA Executive Director Steve Richardson

This is a letter of appreciation and recognition to the Cotton Bowl, the State Fair of Texas and the sports information departments at both Texas and Oklahoma for a job well done regarding the postgame interview procedures at the game on Oct. 6, 2001.

As most of you know, the FWAA had requested an

improved postgame interview procedure at the game for several years. And the FWAA believes the new press tents in a secured area away from bands, fans and moving vehicles were a splendid development. The FWAA hopes this becomes a permanent fixture at the game.

The current setup provides the media space to do its job while protecting the safety of all involved. Quite frankly, the previous atmosphere was detrimental and frustrating to all involved.

If the FWAA can be of any service regarding the postgame procedures in the future, we will be glad to offer feedback.

Again, thanks for a job well done!

## A reporter's harvest: Unreturned calls, evasion, clichés, sweet nothings

By Bud Withers  
*Seattle Times*  
Sept. 5, 2001

Lloyd Carr, the Michigan football coach, pondered a question about the status of his inside linebackers, Larry Foote and Eric Brackins. But not for very long.

"I have not met with our trainer yet," Carr said. "We'll know more later."

At Michigan, that doesn't mean he'll say more later. When a follow-up question on a conference call mentioned that accounts said Foote left in the first quarter of a victory over Miami of Ohio Saturday and didn't return, Carr said, "I really don't want to get into that."

Which, as war chants go, is as fitting for Michigan as "Go Blue."

Don't expect to read any inflammatory quotes from Ann Arbor this week. In fact, don't expect to read anything about Michigan. In the classic style of the old Big Ten, the Wolverines patrol their fortress like the Pentagon.

Puget Sound-area reporters who left messages with Michigan publicists in recent weeks mostly found their calls unreturned. Several hoped for a short audience with Larry Stevens, who shares playing time at defensive end. Stevens, of Wilson High in Tacoma, was ardently recruited during UW Coach Rick Neuheisel's first January here.

A publicist Monday said no, Stevens wouldn't be

available. He explained that the Wolverines allow only juniors and seniors to be interviewed, and Stevens is a third-year sophomore.

He did, however, put Stevens' position mate, Dan Rumishek, on the phone. There were no questions for Rumishek, the problem being that he is not from Tacoma, but from Addison, Ill.

The Wolverines who joined Rumishek on the call were unfailingly polite, responsive and pretty much unwilling to discuss anything more revealing than their uniform number.

Safety Julius Curry, asked how the Wolverines could know anything about an emerging quarterback like Washington's Cody Pickett, did divulge this: "We just started watching film of him today. We kind of take it one game at a time."

Then there is the offensive line on Michigan's depth chart. Think you're going to gain an edge by seeing a weight and projecting a frame or body type? Of the 12 guys, tackle to tackle, one is listed at 295, and the other 11 are either 298 or 299.

Either the Wolverines have been watching *The Stepford Wives* instead of Huskies game film, or they turn players out like quarter-panels at the GMC plant down the road.

Carr said he'd take one more question. Nobody got to ask whether his hero was Bo Schembechler or Woody Hayes.



## 2002 ROSE BOWL CREDENTIAL REQUEST FORM **DEADLINE: Friday, Dec. 14, 2001**

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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800 South Broadway, Suite 400  
Walnut Creek, CA 94596  
925-932-4411 (office) 925-932-4601 (fax)



# FWAA Lodge notes ....

## Nagurski banquet rescheduled

The Charlotte Touchdown Club has moved the date of the Bronko Nagurski Trophy banquet back one week to Dec. 10 because of the college football scheduling conflicts forced by the tragedies in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania on Sept. 11.

The Bronko Nagurski Trophy is presented to the best defensive player in college football each year. The FWAA has named a best defensive player annually since 1993.

## Comings and Goings

**Neal Farmer** of the *Houston Chronicle* is now an independent after receiving a buyout from the newspaper ... **Gene Duffey** has left the *Huntsville (Ala.) Times* and is a freelancer in Houston ... **Charles Durrenberger** has switched papers in Tucson, leaving the *Citizen* for the *Arizona Daily Star* ... **John Akers** has resigned his position with the Associated Press in Minneapolis and is now editor of *Basketball Times* ... **Budd Thalman**, who is retired from Penn State, is now living in Fredericksburg, Va.

## We Want Your Input

Please e-mail the FWAA at [tigerfwa@aol.com](mailto:tigerfwa@aol.com) if you have any change of address, jobs, or news about awards or books you have written. We also want to know about

promotions, retirements and changes of beats at your school, paper or internet site. We want to know what is going with you. Also e-mail us any news about the field of writing, whether it be problems or plaudits for press boxes, or interesting stories we need to read. We will publish the plaudits and try to remedy the problems you might have covering your beat.

## FWAA Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year Award

The FWAA All-America Committee (Page 5) is taking nominations for the FWAA Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year Award. The Committee will select three finalists for the award. The three finalists will be announced in mid-December. The winner of the FWAA Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year Award will be named on Jan. 10 in Phoenix.

## FWAA's Annual Meeting

The FWAA's Annual Meeting and Awards Brunch will be held in conjunction with the Rose Bowl. The press headquarters will be the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles. A complete schedule of Rose Bowl press events will be included in the December issue of *The Fifth Down*. The FWAA Board Meeting will be on Jan. 2 and the Awards Brunch on Jan. 3.



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