

12.29.2012
FORT WORTH, TEXAS



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For release at 12 a.m., Monday November 12

Boyer First Armed Forces Merit Award Recipient

FORT WORTH, TEXAS, November 12, 2012 - Created to honor an individual and/or group that has brought distinction and recognition to both their service in the armed forces and the sport of football, **Nate Boyer** of the University of Texas at Austin has been named the first recipient of the **Armed Forces Merit Award presented by the Football Writers Association of America**.

Boyer, a long snapper for the Texas Longhorns, and wide receiver Daniel Rodriguez of Clemson University were the semi-finalists for the **Armed Forces Merit Award** as a seven-person selection committee made up of five members of the FWA and two officials from the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** considered 15 nominations for the inaugural award.



With the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** being "More Than A Game", the **Armed Forces Merit Award** is one of two "accolades" presented by the organizers of the postseason contest that is owned and operated by ESPN. Since 2006, the Executive Committee of the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** has presented the **Great American Patriot Award presented by Armed Forces Insurance**.

Boyer will be presented the **Armed Forces Merit Award** at the University of Texas Football Banquet on December 7 in Austin. His accomplishments will also be recognized during bowl week for the 10th annual game to be played December 29 at Amon G. Carter Stadium in a game matching schools from Conference USA and the Mountain West Conference.



MORE THAN A BOWL GAME

ESPNU also produced vignettes ("For the Love of the Game") during Veterans Week and featured Boyer. Here is the link to watch the Boyer vignettes - http://youtu.be/KCoTocazV_E.

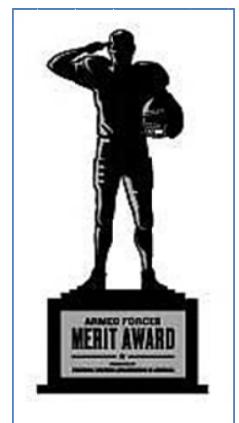
"On this very special day, Veterans' Day 2012, we are pleased to join with the Football Writers Association of America to honor Nate Boyer from the University of Texas as the first recipient of the Armed Forces Merit Award," said **Brant Ringler**, executive director of the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces**. "We had two individuals as our semi-finalists that brought recognition to the sport of college football after serving with honor in the armed forces for our country. It was a difficult choice as both men were very deserving of the honor.

Steve Richardson, executive director of the **FWAA**, echoed Ringler's sentiments along with adding that his association is "pleased to team with **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** to recognize Nate Boyer's achievement as a veteran that used his armed forces experiences to benefit his teammates and coaches at the University of Texas. The **FWAA** also salutes finalists Daniel Rodriguez for his outstanding contribution at Clemson after a decorated career in the armed forces."



The following criteria were used in reviewing the nominations for the **Armed Forces Merit Award**:

- Individuals with an armed forces background that are currently involved as an athletic administrator, and/or football coach/staff member/player that have brought distinction and recognition to both their military service and the sport.
- Individuals and/or groups that have created, developed and/or produced football-related programs that provide care, concern and support for past or present members of the United States armed forces and/or their families.



For more **Armed Forces Merit Award presented by the Football Writers of America** information, please contact Tim Simmons (bfishinc@aol.com, 720/244/6580), Hope Lockett (hope.lockett@espn.com, 817/810-0016), Bill Little at the University of Texas (bill.little@athletics.utexas.edu, 512/471-6062), FWA Executive Director Steve Richardson (tigerfwaa@fwaa.com, 972/713-6198) and/or Rachel Margolis, ESPN at 860-766-2798 or rachel.l.margolis@espn.com.

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A Green Beret Staff Sergeant and a Bronze Star recipient after several tours of duty in the Middle East as a member of an elite Special Forces unit, Boyer decided to come to The University of Texas in 2010 where he brought with him the leadership skills which had made him one of the bright rising stars in the Special Forces. Boyer has continued his mission of education and training as an employee of Mission Essential Personnel, which is a leadership training group composed of former Navy SEAL and Special Forces members.

After learning last spring that all the Longhorn deep snappers were graduating, Boyer grabbed a football and began learning about the special team's position. After practicing in his spare time while on deployment this past summer, Boyer returned to Austin in August where the Longhorn coaches awarded him a scholarship where he became a deep snapper for placements.

"In 37 years of coaching, I am not sure I have ever come across a more amazing story like Nate": said Texas Coach Mack Brown. "He came to us as a Special Forces veteran who wanted to walk on our football team despite never having played high school football because his school didn't offer the sport. Through his tenacity, he made the team and won the respect of our coaches and his teammates alike. It is obvious that he has taken the skills he learned as an outstanding young soldier and used them to reflect an image of someone who is determined to succeed despite all challenges."

Major Theodore O. Unbehagen, a Special Forces Officer for the Texas Army National Guard, added that Boyer "illustrated his technical and tactical expertise while wearing the Green Beret as well as his leadership and character while wearing the Texas Longhorn uniform. Nate's commander in combat was a West Point football teammate of mine who knows, as I do, the importance of football and the military. Together they foster great character in a person, encompassing a multitude of positive attributes, all of which we agree Nate clearly possesses. Nate's actions and continued selfless service continue to foster support to his military family by his football family."

Owned and operated by ESPN Regional Television (ERT), the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** has featured the "armed forces" theme since 2006. Patriotic overtones recognizing all five branches of the service are prevalent throughout the game. **Past Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowls** have included fan-fest areas showcasing armed forces hardware; flyovers; demonstrations by several of the military's top skydiving teams; the awarding of custom homes to wounded warriors; on-field induction ceremonies; armed forces bands and honor guards; and the awarding of the annual "Great American Patriot Award" (GAPA) presented by Armed Forces Insurance. For additional information about the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl, please visit ArmedForcesBowl.com, [Facebook.com/ArmedForcesBowl](https://www.facebook.com/ArmedForcesBowl) or [Twitter.com/ArmedForcesBowl](https://twitter.com/ArmedForcesBowl).

The **Football Writers Association of America** (FWAA) consists of the men and women across North America who cover college football for a living. Founded in 1941, the membership includes journalists, broadcasters and publicists, as well as key executives in all the areas that involve the game. The FWAA works to govern areas that include game day operations, major awards and an All-America team. Through its web site, the **FWAA** works to improve communication among those who work within the game. The **FWAA** also sponsors scholarships for aspiring writers and an annual writing contest. Behind the leadership of president Lenn Robbins of the *New York Post* and executive director Steve Richardson and a board of veteran journalists, the **FWAA** continues to grow and work to help college football prosper at all levels. There are now over 1,200 members. More information can be found at www.sportswriters.net.

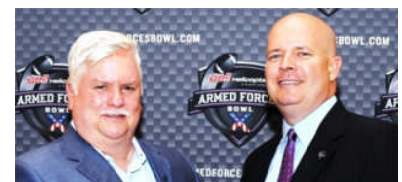
A graduate of Valley Christian High School in Dublin, Calif., Boyer fulfilled a commitment he had made after 9/11 by joining the Army (and being selected as a Green Beret) in 2004. When he finished his second tour of duty in 2009, Boyer decided to use funds from the GI Bill to get a college education.

The winner of the Distinguished Young American Award from the Austin Chapter of the National Football Foundation, Boyer has worked regularly with kids at the Dell Children's Hospital. After being honored with members of the Stadium Veterans Committee at the Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium Veterans Recognition Day as a freshman, Boyer was recruited in the spring of 2011 to resume his military career as a Special Forces member of the Texas National Guard.

Boyer is a member of the Athletics Director's Honor Roll as a 4.0 student and a Provost Award semi-finalist studying physical culture and sports. He was named last month by University of Texas President William Powers as a member of the Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium Veterans Committee, filling the vacant role on the committee of a former Longhorn, the late Tom Landry.

When Coach Brown concluded his letter supporting Boyer's nomination, he wrote that "Nate is a patriot, a leader, and a young man who reinforces to all of us that it is not possible to dream too big. Simply put, he had made it clear to our young people that their role is vastly different from the men and women who serve America in the Armed Forces. As he told them, 'your worst day is better than their best day'".

Three articles on the [Armed Forces Merit Award](#) are available on the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** web site. The first article ("[Those Like Him](#)") was penned by **Kirk Bohls**, the FWAA's second vice-president. The second article ("[Leading a Different Charge](#)") is about [Armed Forces Merit Award](#) semi-finalist **Daniel Rodriguez** of Clemson University. The third article ("[A Unique Longhorn](#)") was penned by **Bill Little** about [Armed Forces Merit Award](#) semi-finalist **Nate Boyer** from University of Texas.



Steve Richardson (left) of the FWAA and Brant Ringler of the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl

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ESPN REGIONAL TELEVISION/EVENT OWNERSHIP - The nation's largest syndicator of collegiate sports programming, [ESPN Regional Television \(ERT\)](#) annually produces more than 1,200 sporting events. Content includes action from NCAA football, basketball and Olympic sports, NHRA and professional and amateur golf, accounting for more than 3,400 live and/or original hours of programming. ERT's owned and operated events reach over a million fans a year and provides more than 200 additional hours of programming. In addition to event ownership, ERT is the production headquarters for [ESPNU](#); syndication rights-holder and producer of national, regional and local shows for college conferences ([SEC](#), [BIG EAST](#), [Big 12](#), [Mid-American](#), [WAC](#)) and manages the Big 12 Corporate Partner Program.

ESPN Regional Television markets and/or owns several sporting events:

Collegiate Football - [BBVA Compass Bowl](#) (Birmingham, Ala.); [Beef 'O' Brady's Bowl](#) St. Petersburg; [Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl](#) (Fort Worth); [MAACO Bowl Las Vegas](#); [Gildan New Mexico Bowl](#) (Albuquerque); [MEAC/SWAC Challenge presented by Disney](#) (Orlando, Fla.); [Meineke Car Care Bowl of Texas](#) (Houston); [Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl](#) (Honolulu) and [The Home Depot ESPNU College Football Awards](#).

Collegiate Basketball - [sears Armed Forces Classic](#) (Ramstein Air Base, Germany); [DIRECTV Classic](#) (Anaheim, Calif.); [Charleston Classic presented by Foster Grant](#) (S.C.); [Hawaiian Airlines Diamond Head Classic](#) (Honolulu); [Jimmy V Classic presented by Corona Extrac](#) (Madison Square Garden); [Old Spice Classic](#) (Walt Disney World Resort near Orlando, Fla.); [Puerto Rico Tip-Off](#) (San Juan); [BracketBusters](#) and [State Farm Champions Classic](#) (Georgia Dome, Atlanta)

Collegiate Lacrosse - [ESPNU Warrior Classic](#)

Additional Events - [ESPN National Golf Challenge](#)

For more information, visit [ESPNPlus.com](#).

BACK HOME AGAIN - The 2012 **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** will return to Amon G. Carter Stadium after having played the last two games in Dallas due the \$164-million renovations of the football facility on the campus of Texas Christian University. The stadium renovations were announced in August 2010 and construction began immediately following the 2010 regular season. The **BHAFB's VIII and IX** were played at Gerald J. Ford Stadium in Dallas. In 2010, a Ford Stadium record crowd of 36,742 watched Army score a 16-14 win over SMU. BYU rallied to defeat Tulsa 24-21 in the 2011 **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl**.

BELL HELICOPTER ARMED FORCES BOWL TICKETS - The public sale of tickets for the 2012 **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** began October 22. With prices starting as low as \$20 a ticket and ranging up to \$150 for a Bud Light Platinum Club seat, tickets can be selected and purchased through the bowl's web site at [www.ArmedForcesBowl.com](#). Armed forces veterans and active duty personnel can also request their complimentary tickets through the bowl's web site, or by calling the bowl office at 817/810-0012. Complimentary armed forces tickets are available via the bowl's corporate military ticket underwriting program while supplies last. Additional information on all bowl activities can be obtained at [www.ArmedForcesBowl.com](#).

BELL HELICOPTER ARMED FORCES BOWL MEDIA CREDENTIALS - All media attending the 2012 **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** must apply for media and photo credentials through the following web site starting in November. Credential request will be processed at [www.SportsSystems.com/BHAFB](#). Tim Simmons, Media Operations Manager (720/244-6580) will forward a confirmation if the request is approved.



BELL HELICOPTER ARMED FORCES BOWL MEDIA HEADQUARTERS - The Marriott Courtyard-Blackstone (601 Main St., Fort Worth, TX 76102) is the official media hotel of the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl. Please telephone 817/885-8700 for reservations. The Marriott Courtyard-Blackstone Media Headquarters will be staffed starting December 26.