

**ARMED FORCES MERIT AWARD  
PRESENTED BY THE FOOTBALL WRITERS  
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
TELECONFERENCE PRESENTATION  
November 12, 2021**

**TIM SIMMONS:**  
Good afternoon. My name is Tim Simmons with the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl. Appreciate everybody joining our teleconference today to announce the first recipient of the Armed Forces Merit Award presented by the Football Writers Association of America.

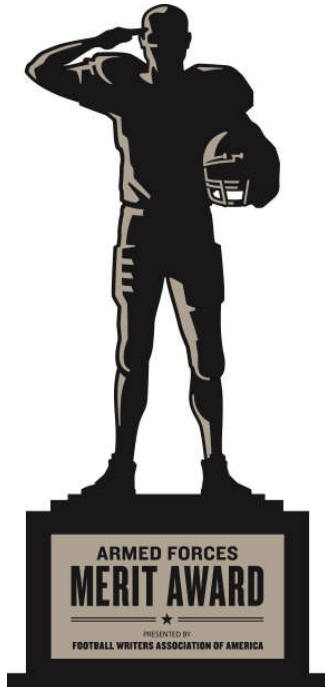
To start off, I have a few words from Brant Ringle, the executive director of the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl.

**BRANT RINGLER:**  
Thank you, Tim, and thank you, everybody, for joining the call today. I want to kind of back up a little bit and explain the merits, as you would say, of this Armed Forces Merit Award. We pride ourselves at this Bowl game on being more than a Bowl game, and we thought this award would be a natural extension of what we do here. I want to give Tim Simmons, Steve Richardson and several others a lot of credit for developing this award for this year as our inaugural award to pay tribute to those that have served our country. It is also an award we developed for down the road to also pay tribute to organizations and groups that in turn pay tribute to people that have served our great nation.

I think there are a lot of service members these days that are returning to our country, and many are getting a higher education. Some of these people are taking a larger step, playing on the gridiron or taking their leadership skill sets and joining the coaching or athletic administration community.

I would say Nate Boyer epitomizes a lot of things. Not only has he walked on to a sport he never played in high school, but he had the determination to be a long snapper, worked hard at it. I'm sure his skills that he learned in becoming a Green Beret helped him with that determination on completing a mission. He walked onto that team, made that team, and has become a figure within that team that has strengthened the team.

I would say based on what Coach Mack Brown has said about this gentleman, he's never seen someone like this person; he's such a leader on and off the field. Not only is Nate a great leader on the field, but he also has



continued his military career outside of the playing field in working with the Mission Essential personnel and others in giving back.

So we felt like he was the perfect person to receive this first Armed Forces Merit Award.

I think we have Steve Richardson on the phone and I wanted to see if Steve wanted to say a few words, as well.

**STEVE RICHARDSON:** Yes, thanks, Brant. The FWAA is very pleased to be a part of this presentation, the Merit Award, in conjunction with the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl, and we're certainly delighted to give the award to such a worthy and represented individual as Nate Boyer of the University of Texas.

It really goes nearly without saying that almost every member of the FWAA has been affected in some way by our armed forces. We have members who have served in the military, and most certainly have had a friend, relative or associate who has helped protect this country, thus there's a great interest by our selection committee to be involved in this award. A couple of the members on that I know have fathers who served during World War II.

Just as important, the armed forces have been an intricate part of the history of the FWAA over the years. Two football players from the academies, the late Joe Steffy of Army and Chad Hennings of Air Force have claimed the Outland Trophy.

Two coaches from the academies, Tom Cahill of Army and Fisher DeBerry of Air Force have won the FWAA Coach of the Year award, and most recently in 2007, Zerbin Singleton of Navy took home the FWAA's Courage Award.

So as you can tell, the FWAA has quite a history with the armed forces in their awards area. Of course we've had winners from Texas in many of our other awards over the years, and really I think we look to Mack Brown and the University of Texas as one of the pillars of college football of doing things right.

The University of Texas has been atop college football for a number of years, and so bringing Nate Boyer in as a winner of this I think is certainly a complete circle, and we're very, very happy that he has won this award.

**TIM SIMMONS:** Thank you, Brant and Steve. Nate, just a few questions before we open it up to the floor. What's your feelings about being the first recipient of the Armed Forces Award, and especially being announced today on Veterans Day?

**NATE BOYER:** I mean, it's definitely a very special thing, this day, to every soldier that's served and to anybody that recognizes it just as an American citizen is - I mean, it's just an amazing experience to have been able to have served and then also to be fortunate enough to live in a country where everyone really appreciates that at this time.



I definitely want to really reach out and thank the Football Writers Association of America and Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl and Mr. Richardson and Mr. Simmons and Mr. Ringler; it's just really - I'm kind of at a loss for words because I've never really I guess I've never really been singled out in a situation like this, and it feels really good. I definitely don't deserve it any more than any other soldier that's serving, but it just happens that I'm playing football, too. The fact that you guys are doing this is just a testament to your appreciation for those that are out there right now and those that have lost their lives and everything. It's important, and all of us really appreciate it.

TIM SIMMONS: Nate, a special player at Texas, one of the premier programs. Kind of give us a brief analysis, how did you get to become a member of the Longhorn football team?

NATE BOYER: Well, I came off active duty, and I knew I wanted to come back to school. Texas, as far as the state goes, it's one of the most supportive of veterans, and with the GI Bill and everything, and it's a great academic institution. So I thought that this would be a great place to go, and football was always something that I wanted to do, and I just had never really got that opportunity.

I thought, you know what, why not just go for it all the way; if I'm going to come back to school, let's make it a great academic institution, and I get the best education I can get, and if I can try and play football, if that works out, that's just gravy right there. That would be great.

I moved down to Austin the day after I got out, actually, and was fortunate enough to be able to try out and work out with the team, and I just made sure I did everything I could to go harder than everyone around me and hoped that would be enough to get recognized and be asked to join the team, and it worked out.

TIM SIMMONS: This past weekend obviously Texas had a big celebration of Veterans Day and so forth. You were lucky enough, I think you told me, to be a captain, but prior to a lot of home games you run out with the flag. Kind of give us a feeling of what you had this past Saturday.

NATE BOYER: I mean, it was amazing. With everything that had gone on around here in Austin, too, the passing of such a legend as Mr. Darrell K. Royal, who was a veteran himself in the U.S. Army Air Corps and served in World War II, and then it being Veterans Day, there was just so much emotion around the campus and the city here, and it was just a really special day. We came out in the wishbone and ran that trick play to start the game, and it was just an amazing feeling to be a part of that.

But yeah, typically on every other game I'll run out with the American flag and lead the team out of the tunnel with a couple other guys, and it's always just a really proud feeling that I have because, yes, I'm running out and leading the team out to start a football game, but whenever I get that flag in my hands the first thing I think about is the guys that are fighting right now and those that have passed. I don't know, it's just such a patriotic thing to do.

College football is really important in this country, and it's important to a lot of us in the military. It was a big kind of release, I guess, when you're overseas and you're able to watch - during football season watch college football games, even if it's 5:00 in the morning. It's something that takes your mind away from the daily battle that's going on. It's always just been something that we've - we really appreciate and we really don't take for granted.

In the States here, I think football is becoming our current pastime, I guess, sports-wise, and it means a lot to people. Yes, it's just a game, but it's an important game, and it's an important part of our culture, and as far as the military goes, we love it. It's such a big deal.

Because of how much a lot of the troops really have embraced it, that was a lot of my motivation for wanting to come back and play because I knew what it meant to a lot of guys that are serving.

TIM SIMMONS: What advice do you give your teammates about the military and so forth, and have you reached out to any of your former military partners saying, hey, why don't you get involved with college football?

NATE BOYER: I mean, I haven't been specific about that, but I've always been a big proponent of encouraging guys both on the team and guys in the military with it. I mean, literally anything is possible if you're just willing to work harder than everyone else around you. You can do anything. I'm not the greatest athlete in the world, and like you guys know, I didn't play football before. But I knew I had the work ethic and I knew the military had granted me certain mental skills, I guess, that allowed me to believe that I could get anything done.

You know, a lot of the things I like to share with the guys is to not take a day for granted because, as I told Coach Brown before, your worst day here is better than your best day when you're in combat, and I really truly believe that. I mean, there's all the little tiny victories over there, but still, every day is just such a grind and it's just tough.

And then over here you have a bad day on the football field, and you've got to just pick your head up and you've got to move on and you've got to fix it because it's not life or death, it's a game that we love. But it's something that you can fix.

Everyone is going to make mistakes, and luckily out here you're able to correct them and move forward. So staying positive and picking up your teammates, I mean, that's such a big deal and it's so crucial to success on the football field, so that's something I like to share with the guys here.

And then as far as the soldiers, like I said, I haven't told any of those guys that - I haven't necessarily said, hey, come out and play with me, but I'm confident every single one of those guys, especially the guys that are in the special forces, if they wanted to do it, no matter what sport it was or really what it was in general, I'm confident they can do it just because I know they have the mental

willpower, and none of those guys are going to quit. If you don't quit over there, you're not going to quit on anything over here.

**Q. You mentioned the GI Bill helping you. Do you think you would have gone to college without the help of the GI Bill, and I'm wondering how many of your fellow servicemen have taken advantage of that.**

NATE BOYER: I know a lot of guys are taking advantage of that, and not only for themselves. What's great about the GI Bill now is if you don't use it for yourself, you can pass it on to a dependent, to a family member. So a lot of them, their wives and their children are using them, which is a pretty good deal, because a lot of those guys will be career servicemen and may never have the desire to or need to use that GI Bill, and then it doesn't go to waste, you can use it for your kids and family members.

And guys that go, too, guys that were in and decide to go to college, too, I think that's a big reason that I think some people even join the military, so they can get the opportunity to have their education taken care of. It's a great deal, and it's a big part of why I think I came back to school, definitely.

**Q. What background did you have in sports? Did you play any sports in high school? You said you didn't play high school football. Did you have any background in basketball, baseball or anything?**

NATE BOYER: Yeah, exactly, I played baseball and basketball. Growing up I played a lot of different things. My parents were very active people, and I mean, I did - we lived in Colorado for a while, so I ski raced, and I also played golf some when I was younger. But baseball and basketball were always my favorites that I played. I loved watching football, and I always kind of wanted to.

When I was really young, they got me into soccer and I was doing that, and then by the time I got up into - closer to high school, I was just so involved in basketball, a lot of those sports become a year-round sport if you're kind of serious about them, if you want to get better. And I was always a good player, but I was never a - I was never the best player on the team or anything like that. But I definitely was a hard worker then even, and I know that that is what helped me be at least semi-successful in high school.

But yeah, and football, I just didn't play it younger, and so maybe at the time I kind of thought, well, it'll be hard to make up for lost time now. And then I kind of was rethinking that, and I ended up going to a smaller high school and graduating - the one I graduated from didn't have a football team at all, so I just didn't do it. They actually have a team now, and they're doing pretty good, I think. It's just one of those things, it just never happened, and I kind of regretted it, I think, never getting that chance or at least taking advantage of that opportunity.

**Q. What really motivates you, I guess, on and off the field since you've returned from active duty?**

NATE BOYER: Boy, I guess just - I think I just have a confidence that I didn't have before in that really believing and knowing that no matter what obstacles arise, because there's always going to be them on and off the field in everything you're doing, that I'll be able to handle it because after seeing combat and just being involved in a third-world country and helping to try to build that place up and working with people that you don't even speak the same language of and you end up fighting alongside them, you learn how to really trust not only the people you're working with but definitely yourself and your instincts.

You know what you need to do to get something done, and there's a lot of outside-the-box thinking that comes with being in the special forces. We're definitely the type of group that does whatever we can to accomplish the mission, and it's not always what we draw up in the playbook. That has definitely helped me over here because I may not have the circumstances or the situation laid in front of me that would seem like it would be easy to accomplish whatever goal I have, and there's always a way. Literally nothing is impossible if you just believe in yourself, and like I said, are willing to just work harder than everybody around you. That's the biggest thing.

Football is such a great sport about that. It draws so many similarities to the structure of the military, where you're fighting or you're playing for the man next to you, and everybody has got to do their job and everybody has got to stay in their lane. If somebody makes a mistake, it's the rest of the team's job to make up for it and to clean it up and pick that guy up and keep moving forward.

I mean, that's why I love this sport, and that's kind of how I'm living my life right now.

TIM SIMMONS: Coach, thank you very much for joining us today.

MACK BROWN: Thank you very much for having me.

TIM SIMMONS: You were involved with our Bowl game from day one when we were known as the Fort Worth Bowl, now the Armed Forces Bowl. Is it kind of a special feeling to have one of your players be part of our 10th anniversary celebration in Nate Boyer?

MACK BROWN: Absolutely, at a time when you're celebrating veterans outwardly because we should be celebrating our troops and our veterans on a daily basis and praying for them on a daily basis, but when we have a day set aside and still remembering today all the people who have given their lives and their time and their effort and sacrifices for their family, it makes me so proud not only to have been involved in the starting of your Bowl but also to have a young man that has meant so much to our football team and taught us so much to get this first award.

TIM SIMMONS: You had mentioned that Nate has been pretty remarkable. Kind of go through some things that he's really helped your football team. I guess he's been with you for two years now.

MACK BROWN: Yes, he's a 31-year-old

sophomore, and he's just an amazing story, when you think that he went to a high school that did not play football.

But he decided that when he saw our team play that he wanted to not only get into the University of Texas, which is very difficult to do as a student, but also he wanted to join our football team without any background whatsoever, and then even more amazing, he was not able to play very much. He's a young man that recovered a kickoff for us I think last year, but he saw that his only chance to play possibly would be as a deep snapper because our deep snapper was graduating, and we only had a freshman coming in, and he had never deep snapped a day before in his life, but he decided that he was going to get that job.

And remarkable as it is, he is now the deep snapper on our extra points and field goals.

He's a young guy that decides what he wants and goes for it and defies all odds. He also is a patriot because he cares about our country, and when some things happened in our country around 9/11 he decided he wanted to go help keep our children and our grandchildren safe, and once again, he defied all odds, he becomes a Green Beret, and today is still working for our special forces.

**TIM SIMMONS:** You've been coaching for many, many years. Have you ever had a player like Nate before? Can you cite other examples where you've had ex-armed forces veterans play for your football team.

**MACK BROWN:** We had Ahmard Hall that walked on, and he was a special young man, as well. He started for us. He was a Marine and ended up having great career with the Tennessee Titans. But it doesn't happen very often. And obviously our young people in the military have very tight - they have unbelievable discipline and desire, and when they set their sights on something, they go get it, and that's one of the great things that Nate has given us. He's talked to our teams about boot camp when we're in two-a-days. He's talked about, without being specific, about missions he's been on in Iraq and Afghanistan. The special forces people ask us if they can still borrow him in the summer, so he doesn't even get to work out with our team some in the summer. He goes and helps keep our country free.

And at the same time he's very humble. He is very honest, he's very sincere, and he's very giving.

**Q. What kind of inspiration is he to your coaching staff?**

**MACK BROWN:** He's a tremendous inspiration for all of us because - we actually gave him a game ball after the game. He and Frank Denius, who is a war hero, charged the hill in D-Day, were in our dressing room, so we gave a ball in Coach Royal's honor, we gave Frank Denius the game ball and we can't give Nate the game ball until he graduates, but we honored him with a game ball, and he will get it upon graduation. Our team is very involved with the military. It influences a lot. We had Admiral McRaven that is head of the Seals come and speak to our team

earlier, and he was an honorary captain. We had Major Dan Rooney come and speak to our team, as well, earlier, and both of those war heroes basically acknowledged Nate as a young person that they sure knew who he was and what he'd done for our country.

And about probably 85 percent of our team has family influence in the military, and for Nate to stand up and honor us in so many different ways and tell us about them, the war and what it meant to him and why he is a patriot that fights for our country has been really, really special for all of us. It also lets our young guys that are much younger than him understand that at the same time, we've got to grow up, we've got to learn, and he's a giver, not a taker, and that's one of the biggest messages he's sent.

When we were talking about the Coach Royal story the other day, we said Coach Royal came to become the head coach at 32, and Nate is 31, so he's a much older influence and a very mature influence in that dressing room and on the field, and a lot of guys go to him for counseling and ask him about things. He's very, very open in what he does.

We also had two of his special forces teammates come and talk to our team, as well, about teamwork and hard work and leadership. So Nate has had a huge influence on our team.

**Q. Nate, what are your future plans, and do they involve the military?**

**NATE BOYER:** Yes, they do, sir. You know, this summer coming up, I'm fully prepared and planning on going to Afghanistan. I know that's not real far in the future, but that's where I'm at right now, and I think with that - and I have two more years left here playing football and going to school. That's where I'm at right now, and I truly believe that God is going to set me on whatever path he wants to, and I'll just - hopefully I'll be willing and able and ready to listen and see the signs when those come up.

But as far as right now, that's a lot on my plate if I want to do that stuff right and keep this team winning and keep this - keep serving in the military with my buddies and being able to do both of those things and go to school is quite a bit right now. But I mean, I love every minute of it. That's my plans as far as right now, and we'll see where life takes me after that.

**TIM SIMMONS:** Thank you, everyone, for participating. Nate, congratulations on being the first recipient of the Arms Forces Merit Award presented by the Football Writers Association of America. We look forward to seeing you at the Texas football banquet in December.

**NATE BOYER:** Thank you very much, sir.

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