

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Orange Bowl Committee
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SAM HOUSTON'S FIEILO NOMINATED FOR DISCOVER ORANGE BOWL-FWAA COURAGE AWARD

DALLAS (FWAA) – Sam Houston State senior linebacker **Eric Fieilo** is the first weekly nominee for the **2013 Discover Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award** that will be announced at the end of the season. Overcoming a serious neck injury suffered at the beginning of last season, Fieilo leads the Bearkats in tackles a year later.

Early in the first quarter of Sam Houston State's 2012 season opener against Incarnate Word, Fieilo made a tackle and landed awkwardly. After laying motionless on the field for several minutes, he was immobilized and taken to the hospital.

"I really thought I was paralyzed when I was on the floor," Fieilo told The Houstonian later. "[The trainers] thought I was paralyzed, too. The only thing I could do was move my head."

After Fieilo regained feeling in his extremities, he was diagnosed with a slipped disc in his vertebrae, which was removed and replaced. Doctors took a bone from Fieilo's hip to replace the slipped disc. While recovering from the surgery that left scars on his neck and side, Fieilo sat out last season and helped the coaching staff.

Through the first four games of the 2013 season, Fieilo had racked up 28 tackles, two for losses, including one sack. During No.4-ranked Sam Houston State's only loss of the season to Division I Football Bowl Subdivision Texas A&M, Fieilo intercepted Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Johnny Manziel.

Fieilo, married with a child, plans a career in law enforcement. He maintains a 3.00-plus GPA.

For the eighth straight year, the Football Writers Association of America and the Discover Orange Bowl will announce weekly nominees during the season. A blue-ribbon panel of FWAA members will determine the winner from all of the nominees.

The Courage Award was created by ESPN's senior columnist Gene Wojciechowski, also a FWAA member. A select group of writers from the FWAA vote on the winner each year. The requirements for nomination include displaying courage on or off the field, including overcoming an injury or physical handicap, preventing a disaster or living through hardship.

Previous winners of the FWAA's Courage Award are Clemson wide receiver Daniel Rodriguez (2012), Michigan State offensive lineman Arthur Ray Jr. (2011), Rutgers defensive tackle Eric LeGrand (2010), the University of Connecticut football team (2009), Tulsa's Wilson Holloway (2008), Navy's Zerbin Singleton (2007), Clemson's Ray Ray McElrathbey (2006), the Tulane football team (2005), Memphis' Haracio Colen (2004), San Jose State's Neil Parry (2003) and Toledo's William Bratton (2002).

About the Orange Bowl

The Orange Bowl is a 351-member, primarily-volunteer non-profit sports organization that promotes and serves the South Florida community. The Orange Bowl features a year-round schedule of events culminating with the Discover Orange Bowl on January 3, 2014. Other Orange Bowl core events include the MetroPCS Orange Bowl Basketball Classic, Orange Bowl Youth Football Alliance presented by Sports Authority, Orange Bowl International Tennis Championships, Orange Bowl International Youth Regatta, Orange Bowl Swim Classic and Orange Bowl Paddle Championships. For more information on the 2013-14 Orange Bowl events, including promotional and volunteer opportunities through the Ambassador Program, log on to www.orangebowl.org.