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“The State of IU Athletics at the Bicentennial”
Athletics All-Staff Meeting
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
Henke Hall of Champions
Tuesday, August 27, 2019
Noon

1. AN HISTORIC TIME FOR IU AND IU ATHLETICS

Thank you, Fred (Glass).

I am very pleased to be back to speak to you again on the second day of classes of this academic year. It has been our tradition that I speak to you at the beginning of each academic year. But this, of course, is a special year. It is the year in which we celebrate the Bicentennial of the founding of Indiana University 200 years ago on January 20, 1820.

A Bicentennial is a truly unique event in the history of a university. We are young by European standards, but old by American. Few universities in the United States have been established as long as IU. Bicentennials are occasions for celebration and pride, and this year features over 400 events that will commemorate this historic year. IU Athletics has already played a major role in the Bicentennial celebration, and will continue to do so throughout the coming year.

So given this unique occasion, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect a little more broadly and a little more at length than usual on the role of Athletics in the past, present, and future of Indiana University.

2. BENEFITS TO THE STUDENT ATHLETE AND THE UNIVERSITY

IU's athletics programs have long embodied the deeply-rooted values of our university community: integrity, a commitment to excellence, perseverance in the face of adversity, personal self-development to the highest standards but also a commitment to working hard as part of a team, and an unwavering commitment to playing by the rules. These are among the skills and values that IU student athletes develop during their time at IU, and they are the very hallmarks of Indiana University athletics.

Those of you who were with us for the recent dedication of the superb new IU Pfau Golf Course heard me quote philosopher Matthew Beard, who wrote: "All the way back to the ancient Greeks, the entire purpose of sport was to test character and practice overcoming challenges and struggles in a fictional, contrived environment. [That was] so that when we were faced with challenges in the real world, we would be able to overcome them there as well."¹

For the more than 150,000 student-athletes across the nation who receive \$2.9 billion in athletic scholarships each year from NCAA member colleges and universities,² athletics also provide an opportunity to earn an education of the highest quality that has an enormous impact on the rest of their lives.

The accomplishments and excellence of IU's sports teams also provide a sense of excitement and pride that continues to bind alumni and friends to IU in a uniquely American way. It exists on this scale nowhere else in the world. No matter where I travel abroad, IU alumni and friends are eager to hear about the most recent successes of our various teams.

¹ Matthew Beard, as quoted in Phil Mercer, "Australia Cricket Scandal: A Body Blow to an Incredulous Nation," BBC News, March 26, 2018, Web, Accessed August 12, 2019, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-43537767>.

² "Scholarships," *NCAA.org*, Web, Accessed August 25, 2019, URL: <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/scholarships>.

3. THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMICS

Of course, at Indiana University, our student athletes are first and foremost students. We are, after all, a university, not a professional sporting franchise, and our student athletes are also here to get an education and a degree as well as to develop, to the highest level, their athletics prowess. So, I am extremely pleased to see that they continue to demonstrate the solid academic achievement that we expect of them.

In the 2018-2019 academic year, a record number of 279 IU student athletes earned Academic All-Big Ten recognition, having earned a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0.

And in June, 67 IU student athletes who earned a GPA of at least 3.7 in the previous academic year were named Big Ten Distinguished Scholars. This is the second-highest total in IU history.³

In addition, IU student athletes continue to graduate at their highest rate ever. Last November, the NCAA released its most recent graduation success rate report. IU scored a GSR of 91 percent, IU's highest percentage since the report was introduced 14 years ago. Ten programs earned perfect scores.⁴ Our coaches and the academic support staff who help students persist to graduation at record rates are to be congratulated.

Over the course of the history of IU Athletics, thousands of IU student athletes have earned the highest academic honors from the NCAA, the Big Ten, and IU. These include Academic All-Americans, recipients of the Big Ten Medal of Honor, which recognizes both academic and athletic achievement, and the many IU student athletes who have graduated with perfect GPAs of 4.0.

³ "67 Hoosiers Honored as Big Ten Distinguished Scholars," *IUHoosiers.com*, Web, Accessed August 26, 2019, URL: <https://iuhoosiers.com/news/2019/7/9/academic-services-67-hoosiers-honored-as-big-ten-distinguished-scholars.aspx>.

⁴ Men's Basketball, Men's Golf, Men's Soccer, Men's Swimming and Diving, Field Hockey, Women's Golf, Women's Soccer, Softball, Women's Swimming and Diving, and Women's Tennis

4. A BANNER YEAR FOR IU ATHLETICS

Last year also saw very impressive athletic success and achievements by our student athletes, in fact some of the best in recent times. Last year, a school-record nine teams finished first or second in the Big Ten, and 14 programs were either ranked in the top 25 during the season or finished in the top 25 at the NCAA championships.

The men's swimming and diving team won the Big Ten Championship for the third consecutive year and for the 27th time in program history. They went on to finish third at the NCAA Championships for the second-straight year. Coaches Ray Looze and Drew Johansen were named Big Ten Coach of the Year, and a number of swimmers and divers earned conference honors.

IU's women's swimming and diving team also won the Big Ten Championship this past year, marking the first time that both the men's and women's programs have won conference titles in the same season. This year's conference championship was the sixth in the history of the women's program. They went on to finish ninth at the women's NCAA championships.

The IU men's soccer team won the program's 15th Big Ten regular season title and its 13th Big Ten Tournament Championship. They went on to advance to the College Cup for the second consecutive year, and for an NCAA-record 20th time. Todd Yeagley was named Big Ten Coach of the Year, and a number of players earned conference and national honors, including the prestigious Hermann Trophy.

The baseball team also won the Big Ten regular season title this past year, the seventh in program history and the third in the last seven years. The team went on to appear for the sixth time in seven years in the NCAA Tournament. Coach Jeff Mercer was named Big Ten Coach of the Year.

The women's basketball team followed up its first-ever WNIT championship season by earning the program's sixth invitation to the NCAA tournament and advancing to the second round of competition for the second time in school history.

The women's golf team advanced to the NCAA Championships for the first time since 2007, finishing 21st.

The rowing team finished 12th out of 22 teams at the NCAA Championships.

The men's and women's track and field teams each finished as the Big Ten runner-up during both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

Collectively, these are outstanding achievements and bring enormous pride to all of us at IU. All our student athletes, their coaches, and all the staff of IU Athletics are to be congratulated on these superb achievements.

These achievements are in the finest traditions of IU Athletics for over a century. These decades of IU excellence in all sports have seen:

- 178 Big Ten regular season championships,
 - 19 Big Ten Tournament championships,
 - 24 NCAA national championships,
 - one Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women national championship,
- and
- IU student athletes have won 145 NCAA individual national championships.

Few universities—or even nations—can match IU's overall record of producing Olympic athletes, coaches, and judges. 223 IU athletes have competed in the Olympic Games since their founding in 1896, representing 25 countries, and they have won 104 medals—55 gold, 17 silver, and 32 bronze. If IU were an independent nation, it would rank 25th in all-time Olympic gold medals and 36th in all-time total Olympic medals.

5. WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES FOR WORLD-CLASS STUDENT-ATHLETES

But excellence and championships cannot be achieved without world-class athletic—and academic—facilities. The last decade has seen the most extensive period for the development of facilities for IU Athletics in its history.

These include:

- the North End Zone Student-Athlete Development Center,
- the Henke Hall of Champions, where we are gathered today,
- the D. Ames Shuel Academic Center,
- Bart Kaufman Field,
- the Andy Mohr Softball Field,
- the Cook Hall basketball practice facility,
- the renovated Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall,
- the enclosure of the South End Zone of Memorial Stadium, which is home to the Excellence Academy,
- Wilkinson Hall, IU's new home for volleyball and wrestling,
- the superb new Pfau Course.

and

- the soon to be completed renovations to Armstrong Stadium.

To these might also be added the Ray E. Cramer Marching Hundred Hall.

With the dedication of Wilkinson Hall this year, we, in fact, completed the Master Plan for IU's central athletics campus—a plan that forms part of the larger Master Plan for the IU Bloomington campus. This completion represents a massive investment by some of IU's most generous donors and from other sources of around a quarter of a billion dollars over the last 10 years. And with the completion of the extension of Woodlawn Avenue in 2016, the central athletic campus and the main academic campus are now closely and conveniently interconnected, symbolically reflecting that Athletics is part of the university, not separate from it.

The donors who give to support IU Athletics are some of the most generous the university has. Athletics has a goal of raising \$215 million as part of IU's \$3 billion Bicentennial Campaign, and has already raised more than \$210 million with more than 10 months remaining in the campaign.

But the contribution that IU Athletics makes to the development of new facilities at IU goes well beyond even this.

In January of 2018, we broke ground for the new IU Health Bloomington Hospital, beautifully situated on the IU campus, which will include an Indiana University academic building that will co-locate for the first time, IU programs in medicine, nursing, social work, and speech and hearing. At this ground breaking event, it was with great pride that I announced that a substantial part of the cost of this building would be funded with revenue from the Big Ten Network. This is truly Hoosier Athletics giving back to the people of Bloomington and Southern Indiana—people who, for over a century, have been among the most dogged and loyal IU fans through the best and worst of times. Combined, this new Regional Academic Health Center will make major contributions to the improved health and well-being of all the people of this region.

And this comes on top of the announcement that I also proudly made in 2013 that Big Ten Network revenue would be used to help fund the construction of IU's magnificent new Global and International Studies Building that houses our renowned Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies. This is, in a very real sense, IU Athletics helping to bring the world to IU, to Bloomington, and to the people of Indiana.

6. A NEW BIG TEN COMMISSIONER

I have mentioned the hugely successful Big Ten Network, which brings Hoosier sports to fans around the world. One person who played a key role in the establishment of this Network was the Big Ten Commissioner, Jim Delany. Jim is retiring at the end of this year after having served with great distinction for 30 years. We are immensely grateful to Jim for the enormous contribution he has made over this period to intercollegiate athletics in the Big Ten. I chaired the search for his successor and had the great pleasure of introducing Kevin Warren, who formerly served as chief operating officer for the NFL's Minnesota Vikings, at a press conference in Chicago in June. Kevin is the first African American commissioner ever appointed in one of the Power Five conferences. He will begin his work next month, and will, for the remainder of the year, work alongside Commissioner Delany, who will officially step down on January 1, 2020. Incidentally, Kevin's first visit to a Big Ten school will be to IU.

7. COMPETITION, CONDUCT, AND COMPLIANCE

As much as all of the wonderful new and renovated athletic and academic facilities I have just described will contribute to the continuing successes of IU's Athletics program—and as important as on-field success is—the manner in which we compete is even more critical to the reputation of the university.

It is imperative—now and always—that we ensure, at every level, that we follow the rules. Compliance with all NCAA, Big Ten, and Indiana University rules and policies by all student-athletes, coaches, and staff is absolutely crucial and mandatory.

We have seen far too many examples of programs and institutions where integrity has been sacrificed, and we must not let that happen at Indiana University.

I have consistently said to this group every year I have spoken to you—and will continue to say as long as I am IU president—that the love of sport and winning must never lead to the sacrifice of integrity.

All of us must play by the rules, whether those of the law or those of the game, whether we agree with the call or not, whether competition brings victory or defeat.

Our student-athletes must also act as role models for students across campus and as representatives of IU to the world beyond. I ask you to continue to help them express themselves consistent with the call of The Spirit of Indiana:

- to play by the rules;
- to represent IU with passion, appreciation, respect and distinction;
- to be positive, responsible, inclusive, and integrated with our university;

and

- to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

8. CONCLUSION

And so, given all of this, it is clear that the state of IU Athletics is sound, and its future is bright.

The department and its long and storied traditions are in good hands under Fred Glass's outstanding leadership. Fred has elevated compliance to the highest level of priority, and during his tenure, IU has not had a major compliance issue. He has continually underscored the importance of academics, as is demonstrated by the record achievements of which I spoke earlier. And he fully understands that athletics is an important part of IU that is integrated into the university in all ways, and that it is not a stand-alone independent entity.

Finally, I want to announce that given that this is our Bicentennial Year, my wife Laurie and I will once again, as we did in the 2012-13 academic year and as is particularly appropriate this Bicentennial year, attend one event for all 24 IU sports. Laurie and I look forward to watching our teams build on their recent successes, seeing all of our wonderful new facilities and watching our student athletes and their coaches bring credit and honor to the university and themselves.

Thank you.