

NCAA Convention

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Virtual

Mark Emmert

Presentation



MARK EMMERT: Good afternoon, everyone. I hope your convention meetings are going well so far, and I have to apologize for not being able to be with you in person. I very much look forward to this event. I like being with you in one room, and I confess I was really looking forward to it this year because of our inability to do it last season.

And it's especially frustrating to be here in my hometown and be literally a couple of miles from the hotel and not be able to join you. That's what happens with COVID protocols these days. We're never going to put anyone at risk and have to do the right thing, so sadly I have to do this remotely.

It's also given me a little bit more of an appreciation for the frustration that our student-athletes must feel when they've been unable to compete in a game or a match or let alone miss a championship event. I understand that even better now than I did before what a challenge it is to deal with.

We're going to do what they do. We're going to Sally forth and get on with it, but, again, I'm sorry I'm not there with you.

For those of you that don't know, and there's no reason you wouldn't know my personal history, but I grew up in the Puget Sound region of Washington State. If you grew up in that area, you know three things for sure. You know it's going to rain pretty much always. You know that you're going to drink coffee, strong coffee, and lots of it, and you also know you're going to have some relationship with boats. It's pretty hard not to be a boater in one fashion or another when you grow up on Puget Sound.

So I developed an early fascination with boats. Heck, my grandpa was a boat builder, in fact. So I learned to love and appreciate boating and sailing in particular, I especially liked sailing, probably because my dad was a power boater, and there's always animosity between the two. So I naturally gravitated toward being a sailor, since it was the '60s and I was supposed to rebel against my dad.

And I've always found there's a lot of useful metaphors in sailing that you can apply to most everything in life, and

one that's especially useful to me as I think about the NCAA and where we are right now in our history is an apt description of sailing. And that description, for those of you that know sailing will recognize this, the description is that sailing is hours and hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror.

And I think that's a pretty good description of sailing, but it's also a pretty interesting metaphor for where we find ourselves right now. The reason that you have those moments when you're sailing is because things outside your control, a shift, and shift quickly and sometimes really dramatically, whether it's the wind or the tide or a current or a rock or another boat, something happens that requires you to make something other than just a minor adjustment of a till or trim a sail or something. You've got to react, and you have to do it in realtime.

As I think about the history, the epochs and changes of the NCAA, I see much of that same dynamic in what we do. We have extended periods of time where we do incremental change and we make adjustments, and that's satisfactory and useful. Then all of a sudden, there's something that happens in the environment that requires us to do something more than just minor adjustment.

And self-regulatory adjustments like our self-governance model, they're really, really good at thoughtful deliberation and debate and adjustment and taking your time to work your way through issues and making incremental adjustments. But they're really struggling when they're called upon to make dramatic and sudden change.

And sometimes in the life and history of the NCAA, we've had to do that. We've had to make more dramatic shifts. The last big shift that the NCAA made was back in 1996. That's when we created a new model of governance because the model of governance at the time was widely seen as dysfunctional and not working and been known for a long time. It moved along and moved along, and finally everybody said we've got to change.

And we created the three divisions, the federated model that we know right now. And those debates, while I wasn't part of them -- some of you were. Most of us weren't. But I



know from the history and know from talking to people -- and I was a provost at the time, so I wasn't uninvolved. I just wasn't part of the arguments. It produced a lot of anxiety, a lot of concern, even anger and hard feelings when we broke into three divisions and changed our governance model. But it was that big shift moment that required that we do something other than business as usual.

Right now, today is one of those big shift moments. Today we've got to take advantage of our ability to make those kind of shifts. These big shifts also call on us, provide us an opportunity, but also require that we pause and look at our core values and think about why are we in this enterprise? What are we trying to do here? How do we reset ourselves around these core values, and how do we recommit to them?

The proposed constitution that you're going to be voting on later today, I think, distills down to its absolute essence the core values of what college sports is about. It's one of the things I like most about this document, and I think it's something the committee did extremely well.

They said, look, let's just point to the very few things that we know are essential to make college sports work. First they said college athletes are matriculated students. Second they said schools don't pay student-athletes to play their games. Secondly, they said the focus has to be on promoting the physical and mental health of our students. That's part of this enterprise. They said, fourth, sportsmanship and integrity count. We have to stand for that.

Fifth, they said schools are in charge. This is a campus-based enterprise. And finally, they said inclusiveness and diversity are essential to what we do.

Now, there's not a lot of extraneous stuff in there. They said, that's it. That's the essence of college sports. And interestingly, as I've talked to people in the past months about the constitution and listened to the debates and discussions in the committee, I don't hear a lot of disagreement with those core elements. In fact, I hear the opposite. I hear people saying, yep, that's it. That's the basics of who we are.

Even from our critics. Many of our critics are saying, yeah, that's the essence. Where I hear frustrations and disappointment and even anger is with the policies and the rules and the practices that over the decades we've hung onto, in some cases well past their useful lives. All of those policies and rules were put in place for a reason, but some of them have outlived that usefulness.

I hear from some people also that there's concern about fairness, that a lot of things have shifted, and they want to make sure that student-athletes are continuing to get more support and more opportunities to be successful on and off the field.

And then there's the issue of money. People are asking right now, is money being spent for the right or the wrong purposes? Are we spending our resources in a way that emphasize those core values and helping as many students as we possibly can? That's what's driving frustration and anger both inside and outside of college sports, not the core values.

And that's what frankly puts this whole enterprise at serious risk. Whether or not we're willing to take advantage of the current moment, the big moment and focus on those core values but let go of some of that baggage.

The proposed constitution gives all of us -- the schools, the conferences, the divisions, the national office -- a chance to do just that, go back to those basics and to rebuild a fresh 21st century version of college sports around those core values. It's a chance to look at what is good, at what's beloved, at what's rewarding and what's supportive of all of our student-athletes without all that baggage of the decades.

With the passage of the proposed constitution, the divisions will all have a chance, all of you, to redraw the rules and keep what's working well and get rid of the extraneous that's causing so many challenges for so many of us.

You know, in the coming months then we've got a chance to simplify the rules and the policies and the practices, to streamline the adjudication system. It's something we've been talking about for a very long time, to better align the responsibility and authority of all of the actors within the system to be more effective and more efficient, and to focus on what truly matters most. And that's the opportunity for our students and how we maximize those opportunities without as many restraints -- constraints on it.

Now, certainly there's legal and political hurdles. We all understand that, and we can't be naive about it. We need to also recognize that we need the help of congress and state legislators. But we can't lean back and wait for that cavalry to come over the hill for this one case to get resolved or this one legislative action. We have to define the future that we want, using this new Constitution as the framework to build upon.

We have to make clear why students come first. We have to make changes that proves that higher education in

college are still willing and able to govern college sports, and we've got to recognize that, if we don't do that, if we don't step up to this challenge now to this big moment, others are surely willing and able to do it. We've seen that really for the first time in our history of recent years -- the courts, state capitols, Washington, D.C. They're saying, look, we're ready, willing, and able, and indeed many anxious, to step into this circumstance.

Incremental change has its utilities, no question about it. But this isn't one of those moments. This is one of those big change moments, and we've got to be ready for it.

Now, let's be clear. There's far more that's right about college sports than there's wrong about it. We've got to hang on to those things that work so well, that serve a half a million students every year in giving them opportunities to play sports at the highest levels they can and gain an education and have the kind of success that we know is going on right now.

But the proposed constitution gives us a chance to hang onto that and to build even more success for those students, even more opportunities in a better 21st century fashion.

In talking to presidents and commissioners and ADs and students the past few months, I've joked with many of you that this constitution isn't so much a constitution as a declaration of independence. It's saying, okay, look, we now agree on these core principles that we always have held self evident. Now let's go on and create new structures around those principles. I think that's a really good way to think about this.

This needs to be a declaration that we all agree to, but now in the coming months we're going to think afresh about what college sports is, how it should operate, what it wants to stand for, and how we're going to support our students in new and more flexible ways. That's something that we need to do together. That's what we have to commit ourselves to at this convention, and that's the kind of conversations I've heard so far in all of the meetings I've been in from all of you.

As we go into this afternoon's debate and discussion, I'm very anxious to see and hear from all of you and to see the debate and discussion going forward in the coming months. And I really am serious that this is something we have to embrace, and we have to do it now.

And as we think about those changes, it's always useful to look at some exemplars, some people who have exemplified exactly what I'm talking about. And that's one of the reasons we created the Summitt Award. It's for an

opportunity to hold up one of our own, somebody that's from the membership, who exemplifies the best values and the best acts of support for our student-athletes.

Named in honor of Pat Summitt, one of our best and brightest members of the association, this award goes to someone every year from the membership that's demonstrated real devotion in a lifelong work to developing and supporting and building student-athletes towards success, somebody that's made an incredibly positive impact on their lives.

As part of this award, the NCAA donates \$10,000 to a nonprofit organization of the awardee's choice that battles neurological diseases of the brain. And this year we have an amazing member of your community to give the Summitt Award to. I'm delighted to give this year's award to coach Herb Magee.

(Video plays.)

HERB MAGEE: I like to tell the story about my love of the game of basketball. Growing up in West Philadelphia, every kid played basketball. I worked on my game because all I wanted to do in my life was make the team at West Catholic High School, and I was fortunate enough to make the team and fortunate again the last time West Catholic won the Catholic League Championship was in 1959, my senior year.

And from there I was recruited by only one school in the city, which the school was called Philadelphia Textile and Bucky Harris was the head coach. It was probably the greatest decision I ever made.

Basketball allowed me to be on a team and to help that team win, and I was a successful player because of my ability to shoot a basketball. It had nothing to do with my size or my strength. It was just my desire.

My main thing with my players all the time is to talk to them about being a good player, yes, but also better than that, to be a good teammate. The teams that I've had over the years that were better than the other teams are all teams where all the guys were good teammates. And when it works, we are successful.

My third year as head coach, we won the National Championship in 1970. We'd won 28 straight games.

As a basketball coach, I consider myself a teacher. I'm a teacher of the game of basketball. And all of a sudden, I was dubbed the shot doctor a number of years ago, and it just kinda stuck, probably because of all my time that I spent with a number of teams and guys in the NBA, like



Charles Barkley is the most famous. And I've run into countless players of all ages who have said to me, Coach, I saw you at Pocono Camp one summer, and you really changed my shot. I never got a chance to thank you.

My biggest inspiration in my life and my career has been and always will be my uncle, Reverend Edwin Gallagher, who took a family of four young boys who were going to be separated, and he kept the family together and took care of us in West Philadelphia. And then after that, my college coach, Bucky Harris, who recruited me, took care of me, while I was in school and when I graduated, created the job for me that I have had since the day I graduated.

This award with Pat's name on it, I met Pat at a clinic, a coaches clinic in Philadelphia. I was a speaker, and she was a speaker. And when I finished my lecture, Pat was there, and she said to me, Coach, you can really shoot the rock. So she was watching my demonstration, and I said, well, thank you very much, Coach. I really appreciate that. I can't wait to listen to your lecture, and her lecture was on zone offense. And I'll never forget it because I incorporated a lot of her ideas into our zone offense to this day.

I think there's always way more to college experience than just going to class and studying. I would encourage anybody, I have a grand daughter who graduated a couple of years ago from LaSalle, and she played lacrosse at LaSalle. She loved her years at college, and I think a lot of it was because of her being in the sport.

You don't set out to inspire people. You set out to do your job, to treat the kids fairly, to take team as part of the family. We end up every single practice and every single day with hands in the air, "one, two, three, family," and that's the way we kind of look at our players. So we want to make sure that our guys come in and they graduate and get a job, and these are the things that inspire me to inspire them.

Anyone on any level who coaches as successfully as Pat did, this award means so much to me because of the name that's on it, the Pat Summitt Award, and I'm really honored and excited to receive this award.

MARK EMMERT: Coach Magee, on behalf of the NCAA and most importantly on behalf of all of the student-athletes whose lives you've touched, thank you for your contributions to college basketball, to college sports, and most importantly, for the impact that you had on so many student-athletes.

Now let's hear from Coach Magee directly.

HERB MAGEE: Thank you, Mark, for that introduction. I certainly do appreciate it.

Any time you receive any award, it's a fabulous affair, but when you receive an award named after someone and that name recognition is as simple as Pat Summitt, it makes it extra special.

A few years back I received an award from New York named for Joe Lapchick Award. My wife and I went to a luncheon in New York and received the award. Everybody knows what Joe Lapchek was, a longtime coach at St. John's. And everybody will know right away the name Pat Summitt.

When I was told about the award, I looked up names of past recipients, and one of the names that stood out to me immediately was Julie Soriero, who was the athletic director at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Julie and I are very good friends and have been for a number of years. She was our women's basketball coach, lacrosse coach, et cetera at Philadelphia University. That was the name of Jefferson at the time.

She and I have remained close. I talked to her about this, and she was just as thrilled as I am to receive the Pat Summitt Award.

For the \$10,000 honorarium, we are directing this honorarium to support Alzheimer's research at the Vickie and Jack Barber Institute for Neuroscience at Jefferson Health. I accept this on behalf of my family, my team, and my university. Thank you.

MARK EMMERT: Thank you, Coach Magee, for those wonderful words, and congratulations again on being this year's Summitt awardee. This concludes our State of College Sports session for the year.

I want to thank all of you, not just for participating in this event, but for participating in the entire convention. And more importantly, thank you for all that you do for college sports.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude the State of College Sports session for today. The association-wide business session will begin at 2:00 p.m. eastern right in here at the Sagamore ballroom. The convention delegates may also access it on the digital convention platform. Thank you.

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