

University of Texas Football Player Nate Boyer named 2012 Disney Spirit Award Recipient

Longhorns' long snapper recognized for his service as Green Beret and work with Darfur refugee camps; Sophomore never played football before walking on to Big 12 school

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (Nov. 19, 2012) – University of Texas long snapper Nate Boyer, who earned a Bronze Star for his service with the U.S. Army Special Forces Unit and has provided assistance to autistic children and Darfur refugees, has been selected as this year's recipient of the Disney Spirit Award, given annually by Disney Sports to college football's most inspirational figure.

Boyer, who first considered enlisting in the military in high school, joined the military at age 20 in response to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Before that, he spent a great deal of time coaching autistic children through therapy sessions and later provided aid to refugee camps in the Darfur region in Sudan.

After basic training, Boyer joined the Army's Special Forces Unit, the Green Berets. In his first week in Iraq, he witnessed a fellow soldier get killed by a bomb. He spent six years in active duty, earning a Bronze Star for his service.

"I'd really like to thank Disney for this recognition," Boyer said. "Looking at the list of past recipients, I know the military has really had a presence with it, and I think it's a great recognition. Sacrifice is such a big part of it, and that's maybe the most inspirational thing there is. What they've given, whether it's their lives or their time and service and being away from their families, it's incredible. I may be receiving this honor, but it's really going to all of them."

Upon completion of his enlistment, Boyer wanted a new challenge. Growing up, he was a multi-sport athlete, playing basketball and baseball for Valley Christian High School in California, but not football because the school didn't have a team. So Boyer decided to try out for a college football team. While in the Middle East, he often watched Longhorns games and subsequently set his sights on playing for Texas.

"Nate's a young guy who decides what he wants and goes for it and defies all odds," said Texas head coach Mack Brown. "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. For Nate to stand up and honor us in so many different ways and tell us about the war and what it meant to him and why he is a patriot who fights for our country has been really, really special for all of us. He's a giver, not a taker, and that's one of the biggest messages he's sent."

The way Boyer saw it, learning to play football for the first time would be no different than going into military training for the first time; it would just require his maximum work effort. In giving that, he has said his time as a Green Beret taught him he can do anything. Without ever playing football, the then-29-year-old walked on to Texas. Boyer sought to contribute to the team in any role possible, and saw his best path to the field as learning to fill the hole that Texas' senior long snapper would leave when he graduated.

Now in his sophomore year, Boyer was one of two walk-ons to earn a scholarship. He uses his military background to motivate and lead his team, putting long, tough days in perspective by sharing his experiences overseas. He is often referred to by teammates as "Army" and "America," counts Pat Tillman as his hero, and before games proudly carries the American flag onto the field. In November, he was named 2012 First-Team Academic All-Big 12, he's a member of the Athletics Director's Honor Roll with a 4.0 GPA and has made regular visits to the Dell Children's

Medical Center with his teammates. Along with his duties as a student and athlete, Boyer is still active with the Texas National Guard and spends his summers serving the country on missions abroad.

Boyer will be presented the award during *The Home Depot College Football Awards* at Walt Disney World Resort on Dec. 6. The 22nd annual awards show is scheduled for 7:30-9:30 p.m. ET and will be televised live on ESPN.

"A humanitarian, a volunteer, a soldier and a teammate; Nate Boyer exemplifies the spirit of helping others," said Faron Kelley, Disney Sports Executive. "Additionally, his will and determination have pushed him to be an inspiration, whether it's on the gridiron, in the classroom or upon the battlefield."

Kelley will present the award during *The Home Depot College Football Awards* at Walt Disney World Resort on Dec. 6. The 22nd annual awards show - hosted by ESPN's Chris Fowler, Lee Corso, Kirk Herbstreit, Desmond Howard and Samantha Steele - will originate from the Atlantic Dance Hall at Disney's BoardWalk at the Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

The Home Depot College Football Awards Red Carpet Show - hosted by Steele, Tom Rinaldi and Dari Nowkhah - will air at 6:30 p.m. on ESPNU and again after the show at 9:30 p.m.

Boyer becomes the 17th recipient of the award, joining past honorees Daniel Huffman (1996), Dwight Collins (1997), Matt Hartl (1998), East Carolina University (1999), Hameen Ali (2000), the United States Service Academy football teams (2001), Dewayne White (2002), Neil Parry (2003), Tim Frisby (2004), the Tulane University football team (2005), University of Louisville band member Patrick Henry Hughes (2006), Zerbin Singleton (2007), Tim Tebow (2008), Mark Herzlich (2009), D.J. Williams (2010) and Carson Tinker and the University of Alabama (2011).

Alabama was selected last year for its extraordinary efforts to aid tornado victims and help rebuild the Tuscaloosa, Ala., community. The team ultimately brought much needed hope to the area before eventually earning the BCS National Championship in January 2012.

Williams, now a Green Bay Packers tight end, was selected in 2010 for his courage in overcoming a childhood fractured by an alcoholic, drug-addicted and abusive father. He used his personal struggle to raise awareness and inspire others to abandon troubled relationships and seek help.

In 2009, Herzlich, now a New York Giants linebacker, was selected after overcoming a rare form of bone cancer and helping inspire more than \$120,000 in donations for cancer-related causes.

The year before, Tebow, now a member of the N.Y. Jets, was chosen because of his remarkable humanitarian efforts in support of less fortunate people in the U.S. and abroad.

Disney Sports Spirit Award Recipients:

Date	Recipient	School (Hometown)
1996	Daniel Huffman	Rossville High School (Rossville, Ill.)
1997	Dwight Collins	Central Florida University (Lake Charles, La.)
1998	Matt Hartl	Northwestern University (Denver, Colo.)
1999	East Carolina University *	East Carolina University (Greenville, N.C.)
2000	Hameen Ali	College of William & Mary (Dover, Del.)
2001	U.S. Air Force Academy **	U.S. Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, Colo.)

	U.S. Military Academy **	U.S. Military Academy (West Point, N.Y.)
	U.S. Naval Academy **	U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis, Md.)
2002	Dewayne White	University of Louisville (Marbury, Ala.)
2003	Neil Parry	San Jose State University (Sonora, Calif.)
2004	Tim Frisby	University of South Carolina (Allentown, Pa.)
2005	Tulane University*	Tulane University (New Orleans, La.)
2006	Patrick Henry Hughes	University of Louisville (Louisville, Ky.)
2007	Zerbin Singleton	United States Naval Academy (Annapolis, Md.)
2008	Tim Tebow	University of Florida (Jacksonville, Fla.)
2009	Mark Herzlich	Boston College (Wayne, Pa.)
2010	D.J. Williams	University of Arkansas (Little Rock, Ark.)
2011	Carson Tinker*	University of Alabama (Murfreesboro, Tenn.)
2012	Nate Boyer	University of Texas (Austin, Tex.)

* presented to entire football team

** presented to football teams at all three service academies