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Army Football Fans:

Winning is important, and the winning habit our cadets learn here at West Point translates into victory on our nation's battlefields. No one questions the character, toughness or courage of Army football players, but no Army fan is content with our recent football successes. As Superintendent, I am certainly not content and am absolutely determined to restore the tradition of winning football to the United States Military Academy.

As football is America's most popular sport, winning on the football field has special importance to us as a top tier institution. To help me with this critical mission, this past summer I asked some distinguished alumni and friends of the Academy to take an outside look at Army football. The study group provided many thoughtful and balanced ideas. In general, their suggestions fell into three areas: the football program itself, the institution's support of the program, and oversight of the program. I have evaluated their recommendations and have already begun implementing some changes.

Many of you have offered input on our offensive scheme, and the study group has provided input. We agree that the head coach is clearly the individual best suited to determine the right on-field system of football, and how best to execute it. Like any commander, I have announced my intent and provided the requisite resources. I now look to Stan Brock to execute. At this point, it is not appropriate for the study group, or the Academy, to say too much or get out in front of the coach. But you should know there are changes underway. Coach Brock is re-evaluating the style of offense. He is reviewing the talent he has today, the talent he is likely to bring in, and the offensive scheme that takes advantage of our strengths. It is still too early to tell exactly what form our offense will take next year, but you can expect something more suited to Army football.

The study group expressed concerns with Army's scheduling strategy, and the lack of a clear and consistent scheduling approach that reflects a reasonable prospect of success and comparability to our Academy brethren. The coaches and former coaches on our panel weighed in heavily on this point. Our schedule had evolved such that it was unbalanced and more aggressive than our recently successful history. The Director of Intercollegiate Athletics has just released the 2008 schedule: it gives us a better chance for success. We will continue to seek a balanced schedule that is both challenging and fair to an institution of our high academic standing.

The group also had reservations about the organization of and implementation of our recruiting. I have directed the Athletic Director to re-look our recruiting policies and practices. I am proud to say that this winter our recruiting has been very successful, and we expect an impressive group of scholar-athletes here on R-Day. Finally, within NCAA guidelines, the panel also recommended improving the communication between the coaching staff and alumni by identifying top scholar/athlete prospects.

With my directive, the group focused extensively on how the institution could better support the football program while continuing to support the leader development process of all our cadets. They expressed concern for the negative impact of extensive summer military training on players' physical preparedness and proposed shorter alternatives to Cadet Field Training (CFT) at Camp Buckner. Interestingly, a separate review of the military training program by an entirely different group, including the Commandant, the Dean and the Athletic Director, had also suggested alterations to CFT; what is useful for the football program also enhances our developmental process for all cadets. Beginning with the class of 2011, a modularized summer schedule will shorten CFT after Plebe year, but add another summer training session to the final cadet summer to hone military skills closer to graduation.

The football study group also examined the impact of our intensive academics on our athletes. They observed that a rigorous daily workout regimen to compete at today's Division 1 level, in-season physical education classes, and the load of a world-class academic program can become an unsustainable combination for some players. At the suggestion of the group, we are developing alternatives to the current curriculum sequence that will not sacrifice any of our academic requirements. The Dean is developing a program to allow selected athletes and other cadets the option to lighten their academic load during the first academic term by deferring an academic course to the summer session. This new initiative will complement an existing program that allows selected athletes and emerging leaders the option to "front load" an academic course during summer providing them with a lighter academic load during a subsequent academic term. Again, the separate review of the summer schedule supports this effort – two independent studies coming together to improve multiple programs.

Another area under review is the governance of the football program. We have found informal agreements that lasted only until the next reassignment of the approving signatory. We are now reviewing activities that support the athletic program to ensure their formal, permanent documentation and harmony with other Academy programs.

I am very appreciative of the study group's input to our ongoing effort to improve Army Football. We will not stop here as we continue to seek to improve every aspect of our program so that we are optimizing our chances to win.

Finally, let me say that our mission to improve our football program is not an easy one. However, it is clearly an achievable mission and we are absolutely committed to accomplishing it. I want to personally thank all of you for your continued thoughtful support and assistance in helping us achieve this worthy objective.

GO ARMY! BEAT NAVY!



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