



**Address at the 2011 FIU Student-Athlete Welcome Back Meeting**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on August 23, 2011**



*The following speech was presented at FIU's Student-Athlete Welcome Back Meeting on August 23, 2011.*

My message is simple: now more than ever, it is important to do things right! So let me tell you a story. Do any of you know who Patrick Tillman was? He played for Arizona State University, and then the NFL's Arizona Cardinals. He was named All Pac-Ten and all Pac Ten Defensive Player of the Year. He graduated with a degree in Marketing in three and a half years, with a 3.9 average. He was drafted in 7<sup>th</sup> round by the Cardinals. He was the team's leading safety, and had 144 tackles in 2000. He never had a cell phone, and he drove same old pickup truck, without air conditioning. He volunteered with the Boys and Girls Club of America, and the March of Dimes.

After 911, he entered the U.S. military with a three year enlistment in a Ranger Battalion. He fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was killed in action in Afghanistan at the age of twenty-eight. What is important for us to know is that Tillman was a patriot. He died for his country. But it was an unnecessary death. Do you know why? He was killed by friendly fire!

What is friendly fire? Why is it relevant to you as student athletes? Right now, intercollegiate athletics is under a great deal of pressure because of friendly fire! What do I mean? Somehow, someway, gifted athletes thought they were so special that they could break the rules. In breaking the rules, they are guilty of friendly fire. And their innocent comrades, fellow players will suffer. Years of hard work, hours of training and dreaming, will go down the drain. Why; Because of the carelessness of a few. I know that your coaches spend hours with you on the dos and don'ts of intercollegiate athletics. But, let me put it in simpler term: How many of you looked up to athletes when you were younger? Why did you look up to them? Was it because they were bigger, faster, stronger than others? Was it because they could hit the golf ball further or

putt better than most? Or consistently put the ball in the hoop? In short, it was because they were gifted athletes, and you looked up to them. I promise you, thousands of people out there look up to all of you. You have their respect because you are gifted. Your friends, family, and members of the FIU community expect you to get it right and so do I! Across town, friendly fire is taking down a whole decade of student athlete accomplishment. Friendly fire, the excesses of a few, is casting a shadow on a university, a community, and the entire intercollegiate sporting world.

How do we avoid friendly fire? Each and every one of you must know the rules. Seniors need to step up and take responsibility. When seniors are not stepping up, then juniors need to step up. When juniors are not doing their jobs, then sophomores need to step up. When not sophomores, then the freshmen need to step up. Each of you must have a passion for doing things right. Each of you must have pride in accomplishments on the field/or court or in the classroom. Each of you must look out for each other and ensure that there is no friendly fire. I want people to look up to all of you for what you have accomplished, and how you have accomplished it the right way.

An old Chinese proverb once said “The emperor cannot buy one extra year. If the emperor can’t buy one extra year, neither can you. “Do it right the first time.

No friendly fire!