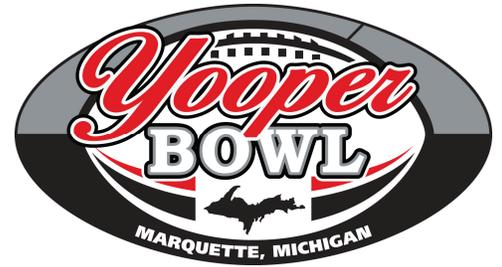




U.P. FOOTBALL ALL-STAR GAME



Day 5 (Friday) Last Practice & All-Star Banquet

MARQUETTE, MI - Friday marked the last day of preparation for the players and coaches before the game. The coaches had the players practice all of their special teams alignments, as well as several live drives and situations. The players were on high alert, and it was evident that both teams were fine-tuning the plays they felt would give them the best chance for success in the game. The players are definitely anxious to tackle someone in a different colored jersey.

The East Team decided to practice once in the morning, then give the players the rest of the day off. They will be doing a pre-game walk-through Saturday morning to keep everything fresh for the game. The West Team practiced twice Friday (once in the morning and once in the afternoon), choosing to use the afternoon as their walk-through, which was a shorter "helmets only" practice.

Friday evening was the All-Star Banquet, where over three hundred people were in attendance to meet and greet the players. Parents, family and friends saw their players for the first time all week and had a chance to find out what the players have been experiencing during the week. The players and coaches took turns introducing each other, and the night culminated in a motivational message from guest speaker, Eric Beverly, former NFL player for the Detroit Lions and Atlanta Falcons.

He congratulated the players and encouraged them to continue doing the things that have made them successful thus far. Eric spoke of your tombstone being a starting and ending date separated by a "dash" in the middle. That dash represents your life, and he asked the players, and everyone, "what is your dash going to say about you?". He shared some of his life experiences from his "dash", and emphasized being ready to take advantage of any opportunity when it is presented.

Overall, it was an excellent message that touched each person in their own way. There is lots of diversity in the players, so whether a player continues their football career in college, or not, they could all take the message to heart. Some players will attend college, and some will go straight to their next career, but everyone should learn to give back to their communities and be ready to seize the next opportunity when it comes your way. Eric stayed afterward and talked to many parents and players, taking pictures and providing more motivation to the very last person that wanted to talk with him.

The Traveling Trophy was also on display for all to see. Parents and fans saw it up-close for the first time and many took pictures of their players with it individually. The trophy will be presented to the winning team, where it can be passed to other teams representing the winning squad throughout the year, before returning to Marquette for next year's game.

The U.P. Football All-Star Game will begin at 3 PM. Doors to the Dome will be open at 2 PM. Cost is \$6 at the door.

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