

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

Remarks Honoring the 2013 Super Bowl Champion Baltimore Ravens

June 5, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Welcome to the White House. And welcome to the Super Bowl champion—world champion—Baltimore Ravens. Everybody can have a seat. That's why we set up chairs. [*Laughter*]

Now, I suspect that these guys are wondering, what kind of introduction is that? No smoke machine. [*Laughter*] No fire cannons. Obama didn't even tear up chunks of turf and rub them on his suit. [*Laughter*]

Player. Man, that's rough.

The President. That reminds me, by the way, please don't do that on the South Lawn. [*Laughter*]

I want to congratulate Coach John Harbaugh, an outstanding coach, and general manager, Ozzie Newsome, outstanding general manager. I know there's some very proud Ravens fans in the house today, including—you got the entire delegation from Maryland here, and they're a little puffed up.

I notice, though, I'm the only one wearing purple. [*Laughter*] Some of you guys didn't get the memo.

Now, I imagine there were times last year when these players were the only ones who knew that they'd make it here to show off this trophy. Because, during the year, they lost player after player to injury; they dropped four of their last five regular season games. In the playoffs, they trailed Denver by a touchdown with 70 yards and less than a minute to go. And I still don't know how, well—[*laughter*]. And then, in the Super Bowl, just when it looked like they had the momentum, the lights went out for a half hour.

Player. They call you for that?

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*]

But these Ravens always pulled through. In that playoff game against Broncos, Jacoby Jones—those are all fans of "Dancing with the Stars"—[*laughter*—he slipped behind the defense to catch a Joe Flacco Hail Mary to force overtime. I'm trying to figure out whether he was doing the two-step or the fox trot. But somehow he got open and Joe got him the ball.

And then, in the Super Bowl, after the lights came back on and 49ers came storming back, this team's defense—the pride and joy of Baltimore—stopped a fierce offense four straight times inside the 10-yard line: one of the most dramatic goal line stands in Super Bowl history.

Joe was named the game's MVP. Where's Joe?

Player. Easy Joe. Easy Joe.

The President. There he is. Good timing with that contract up. [*Laughter*] That was some good timing. [*Laughter*] Capped off one of the greatest postseasons ever by a quarterback: more than 1,100 passing yards, 11 touchdowns, no interceptions. I don't know about you, Joe, but I would say that qualifies as elite. [*Laughter*] And I'd say that if you keep on playing like that, you're going to challenge Biden for the most popular person from Delaware. [*Laughter*]

After the Super Bowl, Joe said: "The win was representative and symbolic of our city. We're a blue-collar city, and I know that we had to keep grinding it out."

You see that same attitude, great pride but humility in Coach Harbaugh, a guy who responds to all the attention he got for coaching against his brother in the Super Bowl by saying, "This isn't exactly Churchill and Roosevelt, just a couple of football coaches coming together."

You see that grit in team advisor O.J. Brigance, a former Raven whose courageous fight against ALS is an inspiration to Americans all across the country.

You see the resilience in players like Torrey Smith who lost his younger brother in a motorcycle accident the night before the game against the Patriots, but Torrey wanted to play, and he responded with 127 yards and two scores. So we're so proud of Torrey.

And then, of course, you can't think about Baltimore without thinking of Ray Lewis and Ed Reed, two of the greatest defenders who ever played the game. Now, these two won't be wearing purple next year. Everybody is going to have to get used to that. It's welcome news for quarterbacks.

Ray retired on top, coming back from a tricep injury, which, I believe, was caused by that dance he does. [*Laughter*]

Player. You got to do that——

The President. But—no, I'm not doing that dance. [*Laughter*] It caused him to miss most of the regular season.

Ed sprained ligaments in both of his knees during the Super Bowl, but he still made the game's only interception. And before he left Houston, where he'll be playing next year, Ed took out a full-page ad in the Baltimore Sun to thank Ravens fans, saying, "I have such deep love for all of you." So that's a class act. Thank you.

I will point out, by the way, that Ed is getting some gray hair though. [*Laughter*] I'm not the only one. [*Laughter*]

Former Safety Edward E. Reed, Jr. No, not at all.

The President. Huh? You're like an old man. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Reed. You know what they'll do to you.

The President. I'm telling you. That makes me feel better. [*Laughter*] I thought I was the only guy. No. All right.

Well, but that's the spirit of the entire team. Last year, this team donated more than \$1 million to charitable causes. They helped young people get active through the Play 60 campaign. Over Thanksgiving, they Skyped with a Maryland National Guard unit stationed in Afghanistan. Later this month, Coach Harbaugh will host a youth football clinic that emphasizes player safety and proper tackling technique.

And today I'm proud to announce that the Ravens will be donating brand new uniforms for varsity football and girls' basketball teams at public schools all across Baltimore; that's a total of 42 teams. We're glad to have some high school athletes from Baltimore here to celebrate with us here today.

So this year, Baltimore won't just be seeing the Ravens on Sundays or Monday night or Thursday night. You'll see their impact in high schools under Friday night lights. And that's a testimony to the connection they feel to this city.

You'll see players spending their Tuesdays—normally, their only day off during the season—visiting hospitals and schools and senior centers, and day after day, you'll see a team that loves Baltimore as much as Baltimore loves the Ravens. So I want to thank all of you for the good work that you're doing.

Congratulations again on your Super Bowl Championship. Best of luck next season; you're going to need it in week 11 when you go to my hometown of Chicago to play the Bears. I brought some Chicago fans in here. Just so we weren't overwhelmed—[*laughter*]*—and keep things in proper perspective. But with that, I would like to have Ozzie Newsome and Coach Harbaugh come up and just say a few words, and then I'm going to get my spiffy jersey.*

[*At this point, General Manager Ozzie Newsome, Jr., and Head Coach John Harbaugh made brief remarks.*]

The President. Fantastic. All right. Let's strike the podium here, and we'll get some pictures.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:11 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jacoby R. Jones and J. Torrey Smith, wide receivers, Joseph V. Flacco, quarterback, and Raymond A. Lewis, Jr., former linebacker, National Football League's Baltimore Ravens; James J. Harbaugh, head coach, NFL's San Francisco 49ers; and Vice President Joe Biden.

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