

Remarks Honoring the 2011 NCAA Women's Basketball Champion Texas A&M University Aggies
October 6, 2011

The President. Everybody have a seat. Howdy!
Audience members. Howdy!

The President. Welcome to the White House. Congratulations to Texas A&M Aggies on your first national championship. Now, winning a national title is a pretty big deal for anybody. And it's an even bigger deal when you think about just how far this team has come.

Fifty years ago, Texas A&M didn't have any women, much less a women's basketball team. When they did finally put a team together, the story goes that players had to share uniforms. At one point, they had to use the men's locker room, which probably wasn't perfectly designed for your needs. Coach Blair here would be going door to door just to ask people to watch the games.

This is a team that used to be known as a bunch of lovable losers. But Coach Blair wasn't going to settle for that. As he said, he came to College Station to build champions.

And that's exactly what he's done. Today, this team has thousands of fans cheering them in every game, including some very proud Members of Congress who are here today. They've defied expectations, they've won close games and played with a whole lot of heart. And now the Aggies are the best team in women's basketball.

I think the players would agree that a lot of credit goes to Coach Blair. He's led his team to six consecutive tournament appearances, which is pretty impressive by itself. But he also tries to respond personally to every piece of fan mail he gets during the season. He throws candy to the crowd before each game. I'm sure that adds to the popularity.

Head Coach Gary Blair. That's right, and cavities.

The President. I'm going to try that. [*Laughter*] What do you think, Barton? Do you think that's going to work if I go to the House of Representatives and just throw candy around? [*Laughter*]

During the championship celebration, he was even telling people to buy tickets for next year. So he is a great salesperson as well as a great coach. I don't know where he gets that kind of energy, but that attitude is reflected by the players on this stage.

We've got Danielle Adams, who dropped 30 points in the title game—the second most in history. [*Applause*] That's what I'm talking about. She's now in the pros, tearing it up. As she said, "My teammates are doing everything for me, so I decided to take them on my back and just let them ride." And that's what she did.

Then there's Tyra White, the Silent Assassin. Where did she go? There she is over there. Hit a clutch 3-pointer in the final minutes of the game to seal it for the Aggies.

You have the Sydneys: Colson making it happen on offense, Carter applying pressure on defense.

These ladies are also serious students. I hear that Danielle and Tyra both took their math exams during spring break. The team has mandatory study halls on the road. They visit schools to tell kids about the importance of hard work, because they understand that a good jump shot doesn't mean much if you can't get it done in the classroom.

And that's the kind of focus and the kind of discipline that makes these players such good role models for so many young women, including my daughters Malia and Sasha.

That's also why they're holding a clinic for some local students to teach them a few moves. Have you guys been out there practicing a little bit? Yeah? [*Laughter*] Yeah, man, shoot. So I know that they are thrilled that you guys are willing to work with them. I fully expect them to be draining some 3-pointers after they've gotten some tips from you guys.

So congratulations again. Thank you for the example that you set on and off the court. We are so proud of you. Hopefully, we'll get a chance to see you back soon. And as they say at A&M, Gig 'em!

Mr. Blair. We have a jersey here. The 12th man at A&M means so much in the history of our school and our program. There's always somebody in the stands in case somebody gets injured. But we're the original 12th man, and I want you to wear it. And we also brought one for your wife. On your wife's it says "Number One."

[At this point, the President was presented with a team jersey.]

The President. Well, yes, that's—[laughter]—I think that's about right. I am 12th.

Mr. Blair. But we'd just like to thank you. And it's an honor for us at Texas A&M to be here, and it's also an honor for us to work with young people like we have a chance in the clinic.

But thank you for your service to the country, and thank you for keeping Bob Gates on

here for quite a while, because he meant a lot to our program.

The President. That is a big Aggies fan right there. [Laughter]

Mr. Blair. But thank you, sir, for everything you've done.

The President. Coach, thank you so much. Thank you.

All right, you guys are going to strike the podium, we are going to get a good picture here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Joseph L. Barton; and Danielle Adams, forward/center, Tyra White, guard, Sydney Colson, guard, and Sydney Carter, guard, Texas A&M University women's basketball team. Coach Blair referred to former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Remarks Honoring the 1986 Super Bowl Champion Chicago Bears October 7, 2011

The President. This—oh, everybody have a seat. This is as much fun as I will have as President of the United States, right here. This is one of the perks of the job, right here. Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest team in NFL history, the 1985 Chicago Bears. Now, I know that may get me into some trouble in some cities that I visit. [Laughter] But I believe it is the truth.

Cynics might say that I'm only hosting the '85 Bears today because the Green Bay Packers were here a couple months ago and I was not going to be outdone. [Laughter] But as it turns out, after this team won the Super Bowl, it never had a chance to celebrate here in the White House. The day after Super Bowl XX, half a million Chicagoans turned out in 25-below wind-chill weather to welcome the champs back from New Orleans. But sadly, the day after that, we endured a national tragedy as the Space Shuttle *Challenger* exploded shortly after lift-off.

So the moment for the Bears to visit the White House was postponed, and the years went by. But shortly after I took office, someone at the NFL realized, hey, there's a Bears

fan living in the White House. [Laughter] And they called my staff and asked if we could make this happen. And so today I am proud to say to the players, to the coaches, to the staff of the 1985 Bears: Welcome to the White House for this well-deserved and long-overdue recognition.

Now, I was mentioning as I was visiting with the players and coaches out back that in 1985, I had just moved to Chicago. So, unlike most Chicagoans, I didn't really know what it was like to be a suffering sports fan. [Laughter] There are a few Members of Congress and big Bears fans here from Illinois who knew what that was like. But none of us had ever seen what happened that fall. Nobody had ever seen anything like it. This city was invigorated and brought together by this team. This team ruled the city. It riveted the country. They were everywhere. They were like the Beatles. [Laughter] And this was before "SportsCenter" and before 24/7 sports news had really taken off. But they just captured the country's imagination.