

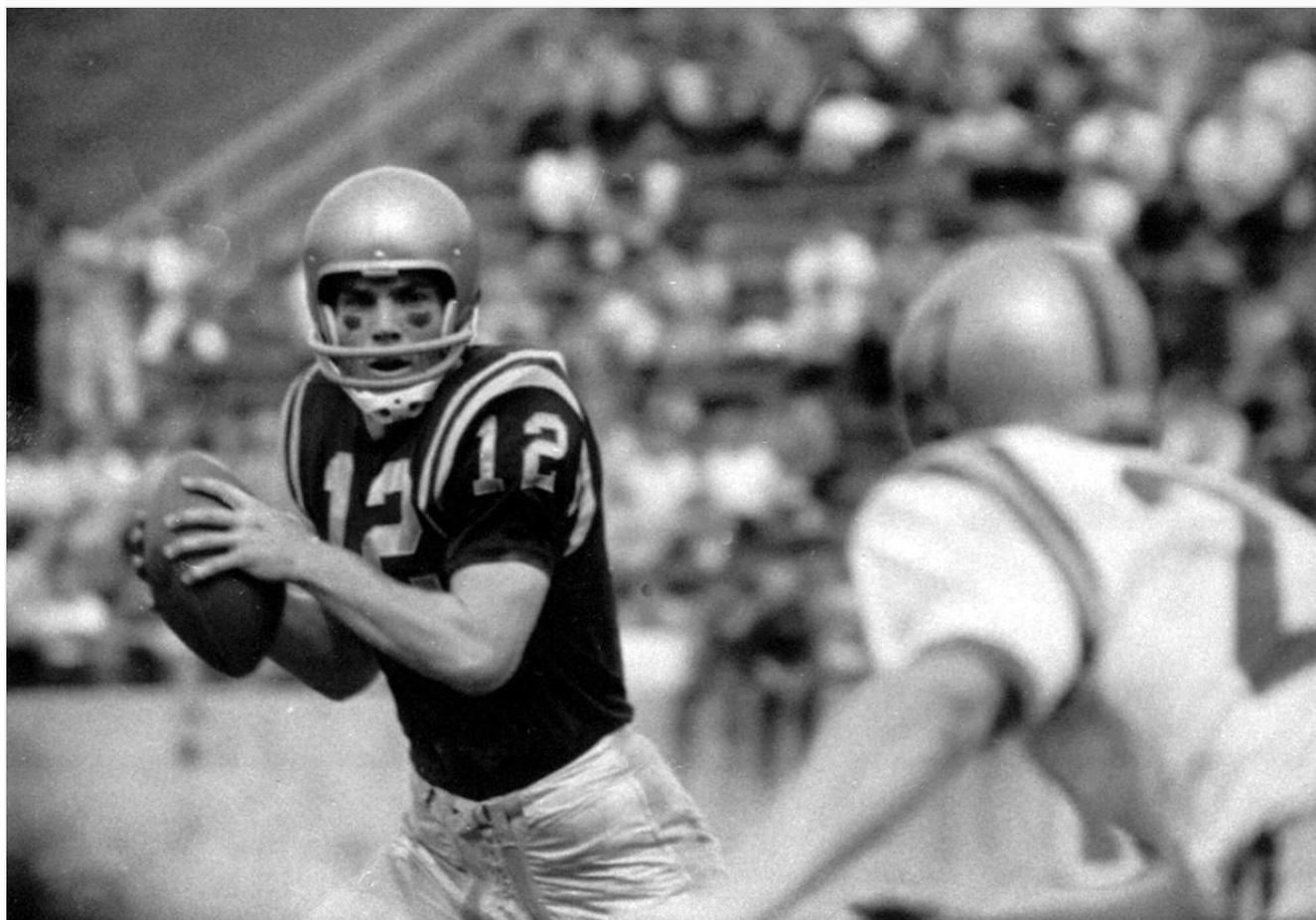
Roger Staubach to Trump: Army, Navy deserve respect, not insults



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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Updated: Wednesday, December 14, 2016, 11:29 PM



Roger Staubach, seen here in action for Navy in 1963, is very bullish on quality of service academy football. (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Roger that? Not a chance.

Roger Staubach, one of the greatest football players in the history of the United States service academies, attended last week's Army-Navy game, so he didn't hear President-elect Donald Trump's criticism on television of the quality of play, but he strongly defended the Midshipmen and Black Knights.

Now, even though Trump owned the New Jersey Generals, is a pal of Tom Brady and has often sat in the suite of Patriots owner Robert Kraft at Gillette Stadium, it's safe to say, borrowing a line from Bill Parcells, he doesn't know if a football is blown up or stuffed.

"I don't want to comment on any political stuff," Staubach told the Daily News, a man also known as Captain America and who just may be the last great American football hero. "But, service football is extremely respectable and very competitive. They've won some big games. They are not in the top 10 this year or anything, but it's still good football. I really enjoy watching service football."

It's a tradition for presidents to show their support for the service academies by [coming to the annual Army-Navy game](#).

Trump got a head start one month before his inauguration by attending the game last Saturday in Baltimore.

He made an appearance in the CBS broadcast booth at halftime for a chat with Verne Lundquist.

"Why did you decide to attend this particular game?" Lundquist asked.



President-elect Donald Trump doesn't know when to stop talking as he takes shot at quality of play when he attended last weekend's Army-Navy game in Baltimore. (AARON P. BERNSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES)

"Today? Just love the armed forces. Love the folks," Trump said. "The spirit is so incredible."

Then, because [he doesn't know when to stop, he kept going](#).

"I mean, I don't know if it's necessarily the best football. But it's very good. But boy, do they have a spirit. More than anybody. It's beautiful," Trump said.

Did Trump really have to throw in that line taking a swipe at the quality of play? If he was the coach of an upcoming opponent, that would qualify as trash talk.

The future Commander-In-Chief is smart enough, I think, to realize service academy football players have a greater mission in life — defending our freedom and democracy, many of them putting themselves in harm's way overseas — than playing football. I can't imagine the young men who will soon graduate and lead our armed forces, the best and the brightest this country has to offer, felt too good about what their future Commander-in-Chief said about them on national television. Whether Trump saw players like Staubach, who played for Navy, or Doc Blanchard or Glenn Davis, Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside, who played for Army and won the Heisman in back-to-back seasons, is really irrelevant. So, Staubach doesn't want to hear that the service academies don't play good football.



Members of the Army Black Knights celebrate after defeating the Navy Midshipmen 21-17 at M&T Bank Stadium on Saturday. (ROB CARR/GETTY IMAGES)

"A couple of years ago, Navy almost beat Ohio State," he said, referring to the Buckeyes' 31-27 victory at the Horseshoe in 2009 when they were the No. 6 team in the country.

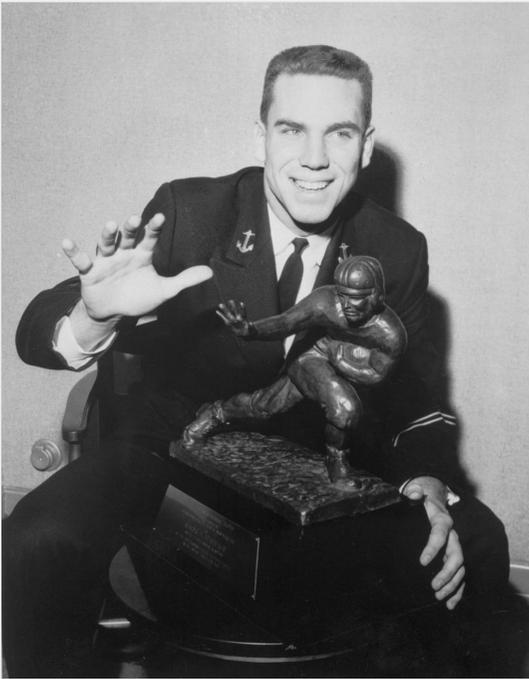
Next season, Army plays at Ohio State.

Staubach, who will be 75 on Feb. 5, won the Heisman Trophy at Navy in 1963 as a junior, played his senior year, graduated in June of 1965 and spent one year as a supply officer in Vietnam. The Cowboys drafted him in what was then called a "future" in the 10th round in 1964 knowing he had to fulfill his five-year military commitment to the Navy. He didn't join the Cowboys until 1969 when he was 27 years old. He won two Super Bowls and is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

"I went to the Naval Academy to get an education and I also made a commitment to be in the service, which I am very proud of," Staubach said. "I would do it again in a second."

[Army beat Navy last week 21-17](#) breaking a 14-game losing streak in the highly-spirited game.

The Navy Midshipmen finished 9-4, including victories over Houston and Notre Dame. They scored over 40 points five times, including trouncing both East Carolina, 66-31, and SMU, 75-31, on consecutive weekends. Navy had been ranked as high as 20th in the AP poll during the season. The Army Black Knights were 7-5 with their biggest victories over Wake Forest of the ACC and Navy. They were crushed by Notre Dame.



Roger Staubach wins the Heisman Trophy in 1963. (JACOB HARRIS/AP)

men who play football for the service academies.

Staubach listed a bunch of games against quality opponents that Navy has won over the years — Notre Dame, Michigan, West Virginia, Pittsburgh. He remembers a 13-6 loss in 1962 to Southern California at the Los Angeles Coliseum when the Trojans went on to be national champions.

“We should have upset them,” he said.

“We were competitive back then. I still think today we are competitive,” Staubach said. “We are also bringing players into the schools that will serve someday. They know they are going to do that and their aspirations to be in pro football will be significantly delayed. Their priority is to graduate and serve in the armed forces.”

Trump, despite his apparent interest in football, displayed [his ignorance in a campaign rally in Florida](#) in October when a woman passed out and then was able to return to hear the end of the speech. “That woman was out cold and now she’s coming back,” Trump said. “See, we don’t go by these new and very much softer NFL rules. Concussions ‘Uh oh, got a little ding on the head? No, no, you can’t play for the rest of the season.’ — our people are tough.”

So, Trump hasn’t even taken office yet, and he’s insulted every NFL player who has ever sat out with a concussion and all the great young



Former Navy and Dallas Cowboys star Roger Staubach says service academy football players deserve respect for the commitment they make to the country. (PAUL MOSELEY/AP)

Staubach qualifies on both counts.

He was forced to retire after the 1979 season because of repeated concussions. By his count, he had either 10 or 12 concussions in his career but he's fortunate he has not had any residual issues.

And, of course, he's proud of his college football career.

"I think I was the luckiest guy in the world to be in the Naval Academy," he said. "It's the foundation of a major part of my whole life. No second thoughts. I felt very committed and proud to be part of the fraternity of being in the armed services. I also have major respect for those that have made the military their career. I'm proud to at least be in that fraternity."

One day, perhaps Trump will appreciate not only how physically and mentally tough players are in the NFL, but that the quality of play he watched last Saturday was pretty good — but being on the field was not the reason they are attending Army and Navy.

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