

January 19, 2021

Dear Members of the Scarsdale Board of Trustees,

I am writing in support of the proposal to rename Crossway Field **"The Richard "Rippy" Philipps Field at Crossway."** His dedication to the betterment of Scarsdale's youth with a focus on athletics is exemplary and, as such, is a standard of volunteerism. As a former player and current friend of his I can think of nobody more deserving of such an honor.

I first met Rippy at the beginning of the 1995 football season. I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and our head coach, JR Veingkeo, told us that there was a new addition to his staff. I'll never forget the sight of a dark-haired, jovial man walking onto the field from the parking lot and introducing himself as "Rippy." My teammates and I grew to love and respect him. We knew Rippy wanted to win, which we also did, but I was most impressed by three aspects of his character: his ability to rein in his temper, his respect for our respective faiths and families, and his ability to have fun.

I am currently a high school football coach in northern Westchester, and when tension mounts in a practice or game, I recall the numerous repetitions of "Aw, shucks!" reverberating across the Saturday morning mist of Crossway as they left Rippy's mouth. While many on the gridiron resort to more crass vocabulary, Rippy's ability to control his tongue made a lasting impression on me.

Another aspect from the '95 season that stays with me was Rippy's willingness to reschedule a game to accommodate my religious commitment. Four of my teammates and I grew up as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, attending weekly services at 60 Wayside Lane. Our congregation had scheduled a youth retreat on a Saturday in late October, and our coaches went out of their way to ask Iona Grammar School to reschedule the game one day sooner. I'll never forget our victory! Because of the Friday afternoon kickoff, scores of our friends made the short trip from Scarsdale Middle School to watch us play. In addition, I learned one of the most poignant lessons of my youth that day. I experienced the thrill and equally intense agony that comes from intercepting a pass and returning it seventy-nine yards to the opponent's one-yard line only to fumble right before scoring because an opposing player caught me from behind. Many of my middle school peers were unforgiving ("You're so slow!" was a refrain I heard more than two dozen times the following week), but Rippy wasn't. He took the time to find me a video full of drills intended to increase one's speed and address my weakness with me on the field. How I worked through this situation is a lesson I share with students in my class at SMS, and I am grateful not only for our coaches' willingness to reschedule the game but for the life lesson the unique scenario gave me as well. Rippy's efforts are central in this experience.

As my teammates and I progressed through high school, Rippy was a constant fixture at our games. In addition to those of our parents, who were devoted fans, Rippy's voice stood out. He cared about us, and I can think of no fan more excited to watch us play. Towards the end of high school, I grew increasingly interested in playing football for the alma mater of several in my family, Brigham Young University (BYU). Their history of success, which included a national title, a Heisman Trophy winner, and two Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks not only added to their allure but made the prospect of joining their team daunting, especially for a kid

growing up 2,000 miles away. One day, while my friends and I, then seniors in high school, were working out in the SHS weight room, Rippy walked in and we spoke. Our conversation shifted to my goal and my belief that attending a junior college first would increase my chances. I'll never forget where I stood when Rippy told me to forgo junior college and go straight to BYU. He said that if I really wanted to play for them and tried hard enough that I could make it. That goal was not one I shared often, and when I did it was typically met with a large dose of skepticism. Rippy's words of encouragement resounded in my mind. I thought about them constantly until, less than a year later, I put on a Cougar uniform and ran onto the field in Provo, Utah. That day, November 18, 2000, BYU renamed Cougar Stadium to honor its beloved coach of twenty-nine years, LaVell Edwards. It's been almost that long since Rippy started coaching youth football in Scarsdale, and I can think of no honor more fitting that to rename Crossway Field in honor of one who's meant so much to hundreds of young athletes running onto its gridiron.

Although I no longer reside in Scarsdale, I hope you will consider my support to honor Rippy in such a manner. I am proud to tell people where my seven siblings and I were raised. In addition, I cherish the experiences I had bonding with and becoming closer to my teammates and coaches on both the football and lacrosse fields of Scarsdale. I was lucky to play with and learn from them. Rippy's support for us meant, and still means, a lot. I've taught at SMS for fourteen years, and I drive past Crossway every day on my way to and from work. I love the name and tradition associated with Crossway Field. I feel that adding Rippy's name to it will enhance, promote, and further legitimize the dreams, goals, and aspirations of your youth. Thank you for your time in reading this letter, and I wish you all the best in weighing not only this decision but navigating the consequential social and political complexities of our time.

Sincerely,

Steve Jackson, SHS '00, BYU '06, and current SMS faculty