**Inaugural CATHOLIC BOWL Summary**

**FAITH-FREEDOM-FOOTBALL**

**Overview:** During winter 2021 the idea of a high school football event celebrating Catholic education as well as athletics, football specifically, was decided upon by Patrick Steenberge and David Bender. Event producer/former Notre Dame quarterback Steenberge and attorney Bender agreed that America was indeed ready for and needing this type of positive showcase. The timing was right, a commitment was made to one another, so work began.

**Background:** Global Football has since 1996 created and developed educational football events in 28 countries on 6 continents, under the leadership of Patrick, who had the blessing of 16 years Catholic education. David has served as a key Board member of John Paul II High School, Plano, Texas as well as with Holy Cross College in South Bend, Indiana. A CAC Top 25 ranking of Catholic high school football teams continues into its 5th year, tabulated by noted sports media leader Chris Lawlor and published on the Globalfootball.com website, distributed nationwide and globally.

**Mission:** Specific focus was directed towards role models who exemplified the key tenets of this inaugural event. Faith-Fr. Emil Kapaun, a Medal of Honor recipient for his service and death during the Korean War. Freedom- With the 20th anniversary of 9/11 coming one week after the games, we honored all who served. Football- Honorary Chairman Rocky Bleier actually embodies all three due to his 4 Super Bowl victories, 16 years of Catholic education including football, and Fighting Back from his Vietnam War injuries.

**Participants:** We invited and were honored to have join with their entire school, parental and alumni communities: Nolan Catholic High School, Fort Worth, Tx.- an expanding campus representing the Fort Worth Diocese Little Rock Catholic HS Arkansas- featuring a stellar list of staff and alumni, based in the Little Rock Diocese John Paul II HS, Plano, Tx.-a member of the TAPPS Conference located in the dynamic Diocese of Dallas Saint Thomas HS, Houston-proudly carrying the banner for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

**Games:** Catholic Bowl games were played Saturday, September 4, 2021 in the Ford Center at The Star, home of the Dallas Cowboys Football organization, attracting 3,000 paid fans + comps to the indoor stadium. Each game included special video and on-field tributes in recognition of Faith, Freedom, Football. Following our National Anthem, a benediction was made by leading clergy from Fort Worth (Fr. Maurice Moon) and Diocese of Dallas(Bishop Edward Burns). Kickoff times were 2 pm and 7 pm, with pre-game and halftime performances by the respective schools’ marching bands, choirs, ROTC squads, cheerleaders and dance.

 **St.** Thomas Eagles 38-John Paul II Cardinals 31. Final play was an end zone interception by St. Thomas to stop the Cardinals last-second drive. A total of 718 yards were gained with only 2 punts and 2 total turnovers throughout this heart-pounding contest.

Nolan Catholic Vikings 40-Little Rock Catholic 34. Triple overtime was needed to settle this one! Both teams racked up 974 total yards with no fumbles, no punts. It was full-go action late into the evening.

**Media:** Live broadcast of both games was extensive, available in the Dallas-Fort Worth DMA on CBS Channel-21. Webcast with the same production carried on CBSDFW.com; globalfootball.com Facebook

**FOX News:** Fox & Friends Live, Sunday Sept. 5, a 4 minute, 30 seconds feature from The Ford Center Plaza reaching 1.2 million viewers with 4 players, Rocky Bleier and Patrick Steenberge, hosted by Rachel Campos Duffy.

**Partners: S**upporting the Catholic Bowl through a wide array of different ways of contributions included: *Advancement Development Diocese of Fort Worth*: Bishop Michael Fors Olson, Clint Weber, Kristy Webb *Catholic* *Diocese of Dallas*: Bishop Edward Burns, Bill Keffler

FOCUS- Fellowship of Catholic University Students

 St. Thomas University, Houston

 Drury Hotels

 Knights of Columbus, Prince of Peace Parish, Plano

 Dallas Cowboys/Blue Star Productions

 Mary and Richard Templeton

**Comments:** Mike Netzel, Director of Athletics, St. Thomas High School: *We could not have been more pleased with our Catholic Bowl experience! For St. Thomas High School to be a part of the inaugural game was very special for our team and our entire community. Our team enjoyed every aspect of the event, from the fellowship time at hotel with Little Rock Catholic, to the inspirational talk from Rocky Bleier, to the hospitality shown by local Knights of Columbus chapter. The game environment at the Ford Center was unparalleled. Our team and fans had a true bowl game experience! We would love to be a part of the Catholic Bowl next year and for many years to come!!”*

David Beaudin, Head Coach Nolan Catholic: *What a game; what a weekend! Next week we head to California to play another top opponent, but nothing will top this experience for our kids and our school. Having Rocky Bleier there also added a great deal to the overall impact on our students.*

George Teague, Athletic Director John Paul II: *Thanks to you Patrick and your entire group for all the effort you put forth to make the Catholic Bowl so special. We at John Paul II have been fortunate to be invited to numerous special events, and this one will leave a lasting impression on our entire school.*

John Foglemen, Head Coach Little Rocky Catholic: *I am so glad Houston Nutt suggested you contact us to join in the Catholic Bowl and thrilled the way it all worked out for our kids. Every moment we had, especially having Rocky Bleier meet with our team was powerful, first class. Holding pre-game Mass in the Cowboys locker room is something each team member will long remember, along with taking Nolan to triple overtime. Much thanks Patrick!*

**Future Plans:** As with every Global Football event, this is just the beginning! We now begin planning for 2022 and beyond for future CATHOLIC BOWLS. We have received requests from the four participating schools to return again, along with messages from school leaders across America to consider including them.

 We firmly believe our mission has only just begun, as the powerful goal of celebrating Catholic Education and Athletics with a focus on FAITH, FREEDOM & FOOTBALL is critical across America. We need a broad spectrum of visionary, talented leaders to help accomplish our goals, and ask for your prayers and personal thoughts and contacts if interested in helping.

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