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Reagan Foundation's Center on Civility and Democracy and The Rose Bowl Institute Bring Together Sports Leaders to Launch Inter-League Sportsmanship Initiative

"Respectful Rivalries: Dialogue on Competition and Civility" Sparks Discussion on Industry's Responsibility to Promote Sportsmanship and Civility

PASADENA, CA – The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute's (RRPFI) Center on Civility and Democracy and the Rose Bowl Institute, hosted "Respectful Rivalries: Dialogue on Competition and Civility" to chart the path forward on a cross-league initiative to promote sportsmanship and civility. Dozens of former athletes, Olympians, coaches, business executives and stakeholders from major sports leagues – NBA, NFL, NCAA and MLS – convened in the Rose Bowl Stadium locker room on Thursday, March 6 evening to explore the balance between intense competition and mutual respect.

The event, attended by over 100 thought leaders, explored how sports can bridge divides and strengthen democracy, with a special focus on the historic UCLA vs. USC rivalry ahead of this weekend's basketball game. Bonnie Bernstein, Founder and CEO of Walk Swiftly Productions, and Clint Bruce, former Navy Special Warfare Officer, US Naval Academy graduate, accomplished NFL player, and Navy Midshipman athlete, led the discussion. Participants shared insights on respect and rivalries, with key highlights including:

- "I believe my rival is my rival, not my enemy. I think we have to be disciplined in knowing that my rival is my rival, and my enemy is my enemy. We need to draw a distinction between those two and govern the language, because the language influences what we think."
- "Sport has the opportunity to grow great individuals and great citizens. But the key word is potential; it's not guaranteed. If you don't have the right coaches, support and guidance, it can end up with exactly the opposite. It's up to the people here to change the trajectory of that and to not only be a role model, but speak up when we see bad sportsmanship and bad behavior."

- “Rivalry at its core is about conflict, and I think at the heart of everything described here is figuring out how to help people digest conflict better. The beauty of sports is that conflict is a love language. When there's trust on both sides, conflict allows you to get the results faster and is a means to a stronger bond.”
- “The definition of sportsmanship, as I've come to learn it, is trying to win on your opponent's best day. You want them to be their best, but you want to be better. That's what rivalries do: they make everybody perform at their best. The Olympic motto is swifter, higher, stronger, not swiftest, highest, strongest. The goal of the Olympics is not to choose a champion, but rather to encourage everybody to improve.”
- “I think we are all grappling with the underlying premise that passion and high performance are in opposition to dignity and respect. Despite this new cultural change over the last three decades, they're not. You need self-discipline to have any kind of long-term relationship. The parallels are all out there, but high performance is not in opposition to dignity, and that means respecting your competitor whether they respect you or not.”

This roundtable marks the second in a series planned by the Center on Civility and Democracy and The Rose Bowl Institute, aimed at leading sports league representatives to develop an inter-league initiative promoting sportsmanship and civility.

About the Center on Civility and Democracy

The Center on Civility and Democracy, an initiative of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to addressing the deep divisions and discord that threaten the foundations of American democracy. The Center fosters constructive solutions by promoting collaboration, respectful dialogue, and principled leadership. Learn more at www.reaganfoundation.org/center-on-civility-and-democracy.

About the Reagan Foundation and Institute

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute (RRPFI) is the sole nonprofit organization created by President Reagan charged with advancing his legacy and principles – limited government, individual liberty, economic opportunity, freedom and democracy, peace through strength, and national pride.

A globally recognized nonpartisan organization based in Simi Valley, CA, with a leading policy institute in Washington, DC, RRPFI delivers impactful public affairs programming, policy convenings and projects of national and international significance, and distinctive educational initiatives. In addition, RRPFI sustains the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, the largest and most visited presidential library, which routinely hosts major special exhibitions.

An hour from Los Angeles International Airport, RRPFI's Simi Valley campus sits on 400 acres, serves as the final resting place of America's 40th President and former First Lady Nancy Reagan, displays a chunk of the Berlin Wall, and houses the plane President Reagan flew as Air Force One to 26 countries. Onsite are the Reagan Center for Public Affairs, Presidential

Learning Center, Air Force One Pavilion, and the Reagan Leadership Academy. More information is available at www.reaganfoundation.org.

About the Rose Bowl Institute

The Rose Bowl Institute champions sportsmanship, leadership, and citizenship. Through educational programs, focused dialogues, and awards, the Institute leverages the power of sports to unite people everywhere. It is an arm of the Rose Bowl Legacy Foundation. James Washington, a former two-time Super Bowl Champion and UCLA Alumni, leads the Institute alongside a current Advisory Board.

Launched in 2020, the Rose Bowl Institute has proven to be an inspirational flashpoint to educate and inspire both at-risk youth and underserved communities in Southern California and around the nation with compelling programming. Sports is a universal language that has the power to unite everyone. The Institute continues teaching independent skills and positive sports values such as ethics, teamwork, sportsmanship, equality to ensure its viewers and participants are exposed to free programming that can benefit their growth as contributing members of society.

Coupled with the Rose Bowl Stadium brand, and anchored by a nationwide, celebrity, values-driven advisory board, the Institute has quickly become a unique leader in valuable, productive dialogues rooted in positive sports values.

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