



Fiesta Bowl MVP Roy Miller Finds Purpose Beyond the Game

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Roy Miller still remembers the moment his name was called as the Fiesta Bowl MVP.

A senior on a stacked 2008 Texas Longhorns team, Miller had just finished one of the highlight games in his career. What he didn't know at that moment was that his success in life wouldn't just be under stadium lights. It would come years later, back home in Killeen, Fort Hood, Texas.

"That year, I played on a big team, with a lot of big players, a lot of Pro Bowlers, a lot of guys that you know probably will be going to the Hall of Fame," Miller said. "I knew that day I had to go out there and perform at my highest. To gain that recognition of being called a Fiesta Bowl MVP, it really just sends chills down my spine."

Miller was drafted in 2009 as the 81st overall pick in the third round by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He went on to play nine seasons in the NFL and is now the co-founder and president of The Accumulative Advantage Foundation. The Foundation aims to offer life-changing opportunities at no cost to military dependents, youth at risk and children in poverty-stricken communities. The foundation has a component called The Kids Advantage, which helps the youth.

His non-profit specifically serves military families and youth in his hometown, especially those living in the shadow of Fort Hood.

"I'm from a military town called Killeen-Fort Hood," Miller said. "It almost felt like a ghost town, like people just moving constantly. The military community is a little bit like two trains passing in the night at times."

That sense of instability is what he's trying to change.

The sense of stability that his foundation is built around is through free football camps, mentorship opportunities, and community engagement. Miller brings in athletes he worked with in the past, whom the kids would recognize from watching them on TV. However, the focus isn't just about football.

"We use the game of sports to talk about football," he said. "But... we use those aspects of the game to really teach these kids that, 'hey, you got to be persistent, you got to believe, and at any moment, anything can happen.'"

Miller's heart for service started long before he had a platform. Raised in Killeen, he remembers seeing blue and gold stars at his high school, each one representing a parent deployed overseas, or who didn't make it back.

"I felt the pressure of so many people, so many kids that were just struggling... not knowing if they would come back home from war," he said.

In 2005, the Texas Longhorns, who placed second in the Big 12 Conference's South Division, went head-to-head with the Michigan Wolverines, who were the co-champions of the Big Ten Conference. Texas defeated Michigan 38-37 in a game that was watched across the world.

Miller recalled one soldier telling him about seeing him and his team play that year. He explained how he and a group of others stayed up all night watching the game. Seeing the intensity that Texas brought was enough to carry the soldiers' unit all the way through to where they overtook Baghdad.

"That just confirmed the mission we set out to do," Miller said.

After having the idea of what he wanted to do, starting a non-profit wasn't easy. In a town where people and sponsors changed constantly, consistency was hard to come by.

Miller said the most significant obstacle they came across was advertising and letting people know who they were and what they offered. The non-profit would spend almost \$6,000 a year on a free camp as a way to let kids know who they were.

Still, football taught him how to keep going.

Throughout his time in football, Miller continued to carry his on-field lessons off the field.

"We have a 24-hour rule. Even if we have a bad game, you had 24 hours to soak in that. But after that, it's time to get up. It's time to get back to the plan," he said. "That persistence, that's what we do."

Looking back on both his NFL career and his current work in the community, Miller said the most significant impact can't be measured by trophies.

“Just like the Fiesta Bowl game, I had no idea, standing around a bunch of great men, great players, that my impact would be something people would talk about to this day,” Miller said. “Now, when I talk to kids and they tell us how their lives have been changed by the services we’ve done, those are the most important trophies that we get to hold.”

