

Te'o Honored With ARA Award

Written by Sean Stires

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NOTRE DAME, Ind. – Manti Te'o has received the first of what could be many awards for his work during the 2012 college football season. On Thursday the Notre Dame linebacker, already an All-American, was presented the Awards and Recognition Association (ARA) Sportsmanship Award.

“I would like to thank the ARA for this tremendous honor,” Te'o began after being presented the award by two ARA representatives inside the Guglielmino Athletics Complex. “Not only for myself, but on behalf of my family. I'm a direct result of the young man that my parents raised and the values that they instilled in me.”

The ARA Sportsmanship Award is given annually to the outstanding Division I college football player who personifies the spirit of sportsmanship. It is the only such award presented to a college football player.

“I would like to thank my coaches for the countless hours that they have sacrificed with my families,” Te'o continued. “To be here to be with young men like me to not only teach us about the game of football, but about life and about being a man.”

The award presenters listed Te'o's work as a volunteer at homeless shelters during his summer vacations and serving as a positive role model for local underprivileged youth and his “quiet humility” among his qualifications for receiving the award.

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“Athletically he has never compromised on the pursuit of excellence,” Notre Dame Athletic Director Jack Swarbrick said of Te'o during the presentation. “(He is) a hallmark of this university in all that it does. He has embraced fully the obligation of everyone at Notre Dame to be a member of the community – not just the football community, but the larger community of the university and the environment in which we live.”

“Finally, he has demonstrated a commitment to service,” Swarbrick continued. “Service of others, which is an absolute hallmark of the University of Notre Dame. He has served the broader community in his work with children. He has served the Notre Dame community through his direct involvement in things outside the football program, and very importantly for us as manifested in the success of this year, he has served the football program through his leadership.”

The ARA Sportsmanship Award was first presented in 2005. Past winners include Barrett Jones, Sam Acho, Jeron Mastrud, Eric Peterman, Alex Brink, Brian Leonard, and DeAngelo Williams.

Te'o is already a finalist for six major college football awards: The Nagurski, Campbell, Maxwell, Bednarik, Lombardi, and Lott. He is also considered a strong contender for the Heisman Trophy. The finalists for that award will be announced next Monday.

Te'o said during his presentation that Thursday was his last day of classes at Notre Dame. He will spend all of next week traveling with Irish head coach Brian Kelly from coast to coast for awards banquets for those honors and then return back to South Bend for finals and BCS Championship Game preparation with his team.