



Making Mistakes is OK

Barry Sanders

"So I guess that takes me to my dad. (applause) Yes. My dad is truly the reason why I am here. He's a lifelong fan of the game and I can assure you that he's as familiar with the statistics of everyone up here as they are. The only downfall is that he was an Oklahoma Sooner fan and even when I went to the arch-rival, you'd be surprised to know that he still rooted for the Sooners! (laughs) If you know my dad long enough, you know it's not often he changes his mind about stuff, and I forgive him for that.

I can think of the day where I learned a precious lesson from him. My sophomore year in high school, I was fortunate enough to be on the junior varsity and I played a little bit of cornerback and I was sort of the kick return guy, I returned punts and kickoffs. We were just a little bit outside of our town, Wichita, playing against a team. And it was a very close game and the fourth quarter came, and I don't remember whether we were up a little bit or down. But the fourth quarter came and it was close and I was in there catching the kicks, and I wouldn't run up and catch the ball. I wouldn't run up and catch the punts. I don't remember whether we won or lost.

But after the game on the ride home, my dad asked me... because it was sort of unusual, he never really said anything about what I should do on the field, he saved his advice for off the field, and trust me, he had plenty of advice for that. He asked me, "Barry, why weren't you catching the punts?" And I was like, "Well, daddy, it was a close game, and I didn't want to run up and drop the punt and cause us to lose the game." He said, "Son, you can play the game the way it's supposed to be played. Don't be scared to make mistakes. In life you're going to make some mistakes. Even if you wanted to stay in bed all day and avoid the whole world, that's not the answer, especially in the game of football. You're going to make some mistakes. Go out and play the way you're capable of, the coach has you in there for a reason, he has confidence in you." That was some of the best advice I think I've ever gotten, because as a young player you want to do everything right and it doesn't always happen that way. As Mr. Berman pointed out, sometimes I did lose yards on a run, but it wasn't for a lack of trying. And I can credit William Sanders for that great lesson that allowed me to be a great player, to be here today."