

Monday, Oct. 25, 2010

## Utah State Athletics Unveils Merlin Olsen Statue



Utah State University honored one of its greatest alumnus and the most decorated football player in school history with the unveiling of a larger-than-life-size bronze statue of Merlin Olsen on Saturday [Oct. 23, 2010] with a special ceremony on the South Plaza of Romney Stadium prior to USU's Homecoming football game against Hawai'i.

A large crowd attended the ceremony, featuring Olsen's family, friends, former teammates and former USU players among the dignitaries in attendance.

Guest speakers for the ceremony included USU Director of Athletics Scott Barnes, Steven Perry from the National Football Foundation, the statue's sculptor Blair Buswell, Douglas Mayberry, who was one of Olsen's USU teammates, USU President Stan Albrecht, along with Olsen's widow, Susan.

NFL Hall of Famer Merlin Olsen, the greatest athlete in Utah State University history, passed away at City of Hope Hospital near Los Angeles on March 11, 2010, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Perry noted that the Super Bowl Pro Football Hall of Fame Luncheon, held the Friday prior to the Super Bowl, will be named after Olsen, one of only two Hall of Fame events named after former players.

Buswell singled out his time spent with Olsen while working on the statue, noting that Olsen wanted the sculpture to show his pride in Utah State and Logan. Mayberry told a story about Olsen's hospitality before nearly knocking off your chin strap, noting the only time he saw Olsen relax was when he scored a rushing TD.

Susan Olsen thanked Olsen's former teammates, friends and the university for their support of the family. She also read a eulogy written by Merlin Olsen prior to his death that wasn't found until after his passing, which talked about Merlin's appreciation of the love and concern from his supporters, former teammates and family throughout his time growing up in Logan, at Utah State, in the NFL and his broadcasting and acting career.

Olsen was a three-year letterman on the offensive and defensive lines for Utah State's football team from 1959-61, earning All-American honors during both his junior and senior seasons. During his senior season in 1961, he won the Outland Trophy as the nation's outstanding interior defensive lineman. Olsen also was a three-time academic All-American at Utah State and graduated Summa Cum Laude and Phi Kappa Phi in 1962 with a degree in finance.

The statue was created by nationally renowned Utah artist Blair Buswell and is 25 percent larger than Olsen's 6'4" frame. When mounted on its base the statue is more than 11 feet high. The statue depicts Olsen during his college playing days at Utah State, in full uniform and pads, with his helmet under his arm.

The base of the statue is adorned with two plaques. One lists many of Olsen's accomplishments as a college and pro football player, as an actor and member of the media, and as a philanthropist and humanitarian. The other plaque lists Olsen's personal mission statement, an inspiring list of Olsen's personal priorities. Additionally a list of all donors to the Merlin Olsen Field Campaign whose gifts were received prior to August 1, 2010, are mounted adjacent to the statue base.

The statue, when set on its base, has at least one unique element. According to Google maps, Olsen's gaze directly faces toward the Olsen family home in Logan where he grew up, roughly two miles in a direct line from where the statue will rest.

In preparation for the statue to be installed a small courtyard was created with seating areas for contemplation. The block cement was used to convey Olsen's personal strength, and the vertical columns represent his personal mission to celebrate others.

The Merlin Olsen Field Campaign began on December 5, 2009, when Aggie legend Merlin Olsen was introduced before a packed Dee Glen Smith Spectrum basketball crowd. Director of Athletics Scott Barnes announced that "from this point forward the field at Romney Stadium will be named Merlin Olsen Field".

The Merlin Olsen Field Campaign raised more than \$600,000. These funds will start an endowed scholarship in the name of Merlin and Susan Olsen, support the Football Competitive Excellence Fund, and allow for the creation of a bronze statue of Aggie legend Merlin Olsen.

As part of Homecoming 2010 the final two Utah State teams Merlin played on (1960, 1961) were honored as Grand Marshals. The greatest two-year stretch in Utah State Football history was in 1960 and 1961, when these two teams, led by head coach John Ralston, combined for an 18-3-1 record and claimed back-to-back co-Skyline Conference Championships.

The 1960 team finished the year 9-2 and played in the Sun Bowl, while the

1961 squad went 9-1-1 and played in the Gotham Bowl. That 1961 team featured Olsen at senior tackle, a consensus first-team All-American and the 1961 Outland Trophy winner. Almost two dozen other members of these teams played professional football in either the NFL or CFL. Roughly 30 of the players and coaches from those teams took part in this weekend's ceremonies and Homecoming activities.

*View the entire unveiling ceremony [here](#).*

Additional Aggie sports news is available at the Athletics homepage [website](#).

