



Former Packer praises character education



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Former Green Bay Packers wide receiver Bill Schroeder gave educators from across the country praise for their work at a character education conference Tuesday and fielded a few questions about football — namely former Packers players Brett Favre and Donald Driver, while he was at it.

Schroeder went to college at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and prepared to be a physical education teacher, but ended up playing professional football with the Green Bay Packers.

He played for 11 seasons and said he never got the chance to teach, except now he trains young athletes in House of Speed in Green Bay.

“One of the reasons I came to speak today is because teachers need to know how important they are. I don’t think teachers now-a-days get enough credit,” Schroeder said during a brief interview before his talk.

“We don’t pay our teachers what they’re worth,” he said. “.....They’re some professions out there that get paid more than what they deserve. Sports athletes are a perfect example. We get paid too much money,” he said.

The heroes are educators, community service workers and the people who are doing the jobs who need to be thanked, but don’t get the thanks, he said.

Schroeder spoke publicly to the teachers after they had eaten lunch and before 14 schools received awards for the various ways they supported character education. He revealed his life story up to this point.

Schroeder actually was a track and field athlete in college and played a little college football toward the end of his college days.

As a track and field athlete, Schroeder said he wouldn’t stop trying to achieve goals after he made one.

“There was never a goal that I didn’t want to get. And what I mean by that is every goal that I would set, I wanted to reach it. And if I couldn’t, I would work as hard as I could to get there. And I think as educators this is what we have to do with our youth,” he said.

Schroeder's parents were both teachers. He said his father was a teacher at Sheboygan South High School and died while he was in high school.

His father was his No. 1 inspiration and Green Bay Packers player Reggie White, who made an impression on Schroeder by knowing his name before they first met — was his No. 2 inspiration after his father, Schroeder said.

He said he overcame negative messages from media professionals that he wasn't good enough by playing professional football and earning his college degree.

Members of the audience asked him questions.

One person wanted to know his recollection of Brett Favre, the famous Packers quarterback who left to play for other teams, including the Minnesota Vikings.

When he was asked about his memories of Favre, Schroeder came back with another question, "Before or after he left Green Bay?"

Then he continued.

"He did amazing things on the football field. He taught me a lot about playing football. He made some great choices in life. He made some bad choices in life. Real men don't wear purple," he said, causing some chuckles from the audience.

The Minnesota Vikings professional football team color is purple.

Another person asked him if he can dance like another former Packers player Donald Driver.

Schroeder answered, never ask him to be on Dancing With the Stars.

Driver was a participant on the TV show that features celebrities from other walks of life besides dance to train and perform in dance competition with other celebrities.

After his speech, Schroeder was photographed with staff from award-winning schools for their work in character education.

Sandy Swartz, the Go Wild for Character conference organizer, said in an interview that the conference is in its ninth year and was initially started by the School District of Jefferson for its own district staff. The organizers realized they needed to attract more participants in order to afford the conference that it wanted for its own staff, she said.

Swartz is a volunteer in organizing the conference and volunteers with leading the character education initiative at the School District of Jefferson. Her husband is the district's superintendent, she said.

The conferences have drawn between 180 and 365 participants. This year's conference had an attendance of 220, she said.

Groups from Minnesota, Illinois, Tennessee and Missouri had come to the conference, she said.

It was held at Kalahari Resort in Lake Delton.

She defined character education: "It's not so much teaching, it's not a program. It's a process. And it's about changing the culture and the life of the school. It's integrating some things like respect, responsibility, honesty into every single aspect of the school day kindergarten through

12th grade. And in Jefferson we take it a step further and it goes into the community with our adults as well," she said.

She added, a lot of people would say it's up to the parents to teach this to kids, and they don't want to take job away from them. Rather they want to partner with them, she said.