Before I begin, I would like to thank both Coach O’Brien for once again bringing me to this little get-together and the Big Ten for the honor of speaking on behalf of the players at this luncheon. It is humbling to say the least. I’m not nearly as eloquent as Kirk Cousins, nor as charismatic as Denard Robinson. But I will do my best. I took a course in public speaking my sophomore year, but unfortunately for me, it was online.

Some of you may have heard that I’ve been known to do a thing or two other than football. One could say I dabble in mathematics. About a month ago, I was talking to a mathematician; an elderly mathematician, at that. He spoke to me about some of the things he had done in his career, as well as things he wish he’d done.

I have realized that, while we are not old, many of us are nearing the end of our careers as student-athletes. And, if you’ll allow me, I’d like to talk about some of the things I wish someone had told me when I started my career as a football player in the Big Ten, speak about some of the things that you should do, or aspire to in your career. There should be four goals: to master your craft as a football player, make your mark in your community, help the young players who follow in your footsteps, and to plan for the day that your football career ends. Because our careers are so short, and our lives hopefully long, planning and preparing for a life without football is the most important of these four goals, but also the easiest to neglect.

#1:

The first goal is to master your craft as a football player. By that I mean work to perfect your technique, become a student of the game, study film, and develop yourself fully as a football player.

Not all of us will become great college football players, but if we fail in that respect it should not be due to a lack of commitment and discipline. The road to greatness is filled with distractions. We are constantly told how good we are. It is easy for a young player to fall into the comfortable lull of complacency. The key is to not forget the hard work and dedication that has gotten us here. Our goal should be to become the best football players we can possibly be, while gaining our degrees in the process. To do anything less is nothing short of a waste of the privilege that we have been afforded.

We won't all be great football players, but we can all aspire to be great. We can aspire to play the game as it was meant to be, while still succeeding in the classroom. Follow the examples set by so many of the great student athletes that have come before us. And consider ourselves blessed to be able to represent our respective universities. I know I am honored to represent Penn State.

#2:

My second piece of advice is to make your mark in your community. At some point in every man’s career, you begin to think about how you will be remembered. I truly believe in leaving this world a little better than you found it, whether it’s through community service, outreach programs, or charity work.

Don't limit yourself to the stereotypes that the media has created for you. Don't listen to what the outside world tells you football players are supposed to do. Aspire to something greater. Show that the daily news lines that so often characterize football players as ruffians, are the minority.

You can call me naive, but I believe that the men in our locker room have some of the strongest characters you'll find. And I don't believe this to be a Penn State phenomena. The Big Ten conference has a long tradition of producing men of great character, both on and off the field.
This begs the question, how to keep it this way. This brings me to the third goal: to guide the next generation of Big Ten football players. As we near the conclusion of our collegiate careers, we cannot forget to bring the next group of football players along, to continue this virtuous cycle of football molding boys into men.

We have a responsibility to the next generation of athletes, who look at us with such awe. As if we have the answers to all relevant questions. In some respects we do. It is our responsibility to share our experiences of success and failure, struggles and perseverance. We must be the role models for the young players. We are held with the task of ensuring that the tradition of this conference, and, more importantly, this game lives on.

My last piece of advice is to plan ahead for the day that your football career ends. Regardless of how far football takes us, we will all leave this game at a relatively young age, and with lots of life left ahead of us. Whether we achieve all our hopes and dreams or fall crushingly short, all of our careers will eventually end.

Some of us will become coaches or sportscasters, and some of us will leave the game all together, carrying the lessons learned to our respective careers. What we cannot afford is to NOT move on. To do so would be to succumb to the thought that we only know how to do one thing. And for any of us to accept such an idea is nothing short of tragic.

In each of us lies great talent, that extends far beyond our exploits on the gridiron. Our whole is much more than the sum of our physical parts. And I have no doubt that our generation of football players, like those who came before us, and those who will come after us, will make contributions to this world that far exceeds the limits of the football field. Thank you.