

Thank you, Jeff.

It's my good fortune to serve as the President of Ball State University, and it's great to be here with you today.

This is an exciting day—a day in which we celebrate the renaming of our baseball stadium in recognition of a Ball State graduate who found success on the pitching mound at our University and who has now achieved great professional success and fulfillment.

I am very grateful to Mike and Katy Shebek—both proud graduates of our University—for joining us today and for being such generous benefactors to their alma mater.

I'd also like to recognize our other donors and graduates who are here and who have provided philanthropic support to our baseball team over the years. As many of you know, we started improvements to these stadiums back in 2014, with the installation of FieldTurf on our fields and the renovations we made to our dugouts. Then, we rebuilt our grandstands and concessions. And just last year, we added a new videoboard and new signage to our outfield.

Soon—very soon—our future Cardinals will benefit from even more enhancements to these facilities thanks to Mike and his family. These coming changes—which will include new clubhouses, locker rooms, nutrition spaces, and meeting areas—will be great for our players and coaches. These enhancements will also play a significant role in our recruitment efforts.

Many years ago, I thought that I might be a serious baseball player.

When I was a young boy, we lived in Cincinnati. It was the early 1970s. So, of course, I cheered for the Big Red Machine. And I thought your favorite team went to the World Series every year!

And I loved playing Little League baseball.

Every Saturday morning, I got excited putting on my uniform and pulling up my socks and stirrups. Until, that is, the day when I stepped up to the plate and saw my first real curve ball.

As that ball came at me—fast and straight for my head—I fell to the ground to avoid being hit. As I was getting up, I heard the umpire shout, “Strike!”

And in that moment, I decided it would be better to focus on running track and cross country.

As some of you know, I was a competitive distance runner in high school and college.

So while I may have ended up choosing a different sport, I still experienced all the benefits that came with being a student-athlete—the camaraderie, the community, and the common commitment to a shared goal with my teammates.

I believe most student-athletes—like me, like Mike, like so many of you—are we are grateful for what participating in college sports taught us. As student-athletes, we learned discipline and sacrifice, perseverance and teamwork, courage and tenacity. These are character traits that define a strong player—and, more importantly, a good person.

As many of you know, gratitude is one of the enduring values of our University. At Ball State, we define gratitude as our commitment to

expressing our appreciation and to demonstrating our appreciation through our actions.

That is why, in the spirit of gratitude, I commit a lot of my time to preserving college sports as both a competitive activity and an educational experience.

For Mike and Katy, their demonstration of gratitude looks a bit different. Their gratitude is demonstrated in the form of this very generous gift that they have bestowed upon Ball State Athletics—a gift that will continue to enhance our baseball complex and the support we provide our Cardinals for decades come.

Katy and Mike, you are the personification of the enduring values that make Ball State a very special institution.

Mike, I would now like to invite you to the podium to say a few words about the significance of this moment and what your experience as a Ball State athlete meant to you.