

Q: Have you ever experienced anything like this Fiesta Bowl euphoria and its aftermath in your years as an educator or as a politician?

A: The closest I've ever come to it is the euphoria following an election when people will stop you on the street and congratulate you. But those experiences pale in comparison to what has transpired since the Fiesta Bowl. I can't go anywhere without people stopping me and wanting to talk about the game. No matter where we go these days, that's really all people want to talk about, and I've never in my lifetime had an experience like this. And as much as I enjoyed my political career, these last couple of weeks trump any experience I had during the 18 years I was in elected office.

It has become more than just football. I was in [a store] the other day and a gentleman came by and said, "Hey, great job at the university ... and I mean beyond the blue." Here's someone commenting on the Fiesta Bowl victory, but by the "beyond the blue" comment, I assume he was saying we are doing a great job with our efforts to increase graduate programming, to increase the reputation of our academic programming, and bring better students to our campus.

Q: What are your perceptions in regard to the higher

education landscape in the state of Idaho?

A: What impressed me so much about our victory is how the entire state of Idaho came together in support of the Boise State University football team, and therefore Boise State University. In my few trips to the Legislature this week and last, I was just amazed how many legislators from all over the state wanted to come up and talk about Boise State and wanted to compliment me on the conduct of our coaches and players.

I was impressed with the way my colleagues at Idaho and Idaho State reacted. I got a bear hug from the president of Idaho State [Arthur Vailas]. We had a full-page ad from University of Idaho in the Statesman congratulating us. I think we've captured the imagination of all of Idaho and I think all of Idaho, like the rest of the nation, looked at the way those players and coaches conducted themselves at the Fiesta Bowl and made us all proud. Boise State has had a rocky history in getting accepted and gaining respect, whether it's on the athletic field or academically. I think it's time to assure our alums and our fans and boosters that Boise State has arrived. That was best evidenced when our new governor, Gov. Butch Otter, opened up his inaugural address with "How 'bout them Broncos!" That's probably unprecedented in gubernatorial inaugural speeches in America.

FALL SPORTS ROUNDUP

RUNNER, VOLLEYBALL PLAYER ALSO STARRED FOR BOISE STATE

While many of the 22 seniors on the Boise State football team played key roles in the Broncos' memorable 2006 season, they weren't the only student-athletes who concluded stellar careers in fall sports. Two of BSU's top performers in their respective sports — cross country runner FOREST BRADEN and volleyball player CAMERON FLUNDER — ended their senior seasons to considerably less fanfare than their fellow seniors on the football team, but with equally impressive accomplishments.

In his final cross country race, Braden earned All-America honors at the NCAA Championships when he finished 50th with a time of 31:56. Braden was also named the WAC's Runner of the Year. In seven races his senior season, Braden recorded six finishes in the top six. He finished first in the Charles Bowles Invitational and the WAC Championships, becoming the first Bronco harrier in school history to win the conference individual title. Braden began his cross country career at Boise State in 2002, winning his

first race at the Northwest Nazarene Invitational. Since that race, he posted six more individual victories, four appearances at the regional championships, three appearances at the national championships, and was named to the All-WAC first team three times. He will finish his collegiate career this spring as a member of the Bronco track and field team.

Flunder led the Bronco volleyball team to a 13-17 season and was a first-team All-WAC selection for the third straight year. Flunder received all-conference recognition during all four years of her BSU career, earning second-team honors as a freshman. The Broncos' JACKIE STROUD earned second-team All-WAC honors. The senior duo shattered a number of records since their arrival as freshmen in 2003. Flunder is the Broncos' all-time kills leader (1,497), and Stroud holds school records for digs in a career (1,477) and digs in a single match (41). Flunder also holds the Broncos' second-best mark for kills in a single season, with 435 in 2004. With 507 digs this year, Stroud also holds the Bronco record for most digs in a single season.

