

Basking in the limelight: Humanitarian Bowl champions honored in foggy Moscow streets **w/video**

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This month's spring-like weather took a hiatus Saturday just long enough for Moscow, the University of Idaho and Vandal fans to celebrate the UI football team's Dec. 30 Humanitarian Bowl victory.

Hundreds of community members, students and visitors packed a foggy Main Street to congratulate UI athletes and coaches, who rode down the street in the back of trucks. Backed up by a posse of fire trucks with crews tossing candy to children, the parade turned west onto Sixth Street and was followed by fans until it reached the Kibbie Dome.

Lois and Carl Duncan said the parade was short, but they were glad to see it included both the football team and the UI marching band, which entertained the crowd with the Vandal fight song and the wacky antics of its tuba players.

The Duncans were both education majors and graduated from the UI about 10 years ago.

"We came all the way from Coeur d'Alene," Lois said. "We're both old, old school alumni."

Carl said he had to experience the Humanitarian Bowl celebration in person and didn't mind the hour-and-a-half drive.

"It's been (more than) 10 years since I last got to see them go to a bowl game," he said.

Olivia and Sam Michelson of Moscow said they enjoyed running after candy and seeing the Humanitarian Bowl trophy during the parade. The 5- and 7-year-olds attended with their parents, Luke and Rhonda.

Luke graduated from the UI with a math degree in 1995.

He said he had a feeling the Vandals would become bowl game winners once again. The last time the team played in - and won - a bowl game was at the 1998 Humanitarian Bowl.

"You know, we figured it would come around sometime," he said. "They hired the right coach."

Following the parade, Sterling Stoddard stood outside the Kibbie Dome and watched as Vandal football head coach Robb Akey signed memorabilia for fans, many of them excited children.

The junior agricultural business major at the UI said the parade was "pretty awesome." He said he knew the Vandals would be victorious even though "I knew it was going to be a shootout."

"I was a little surprised by Akey's decision to go for 2 (in the final moments of the game)," he said.

Inside the dome, UI football players sat at long tables and gave autographs for equally long lines of fans.

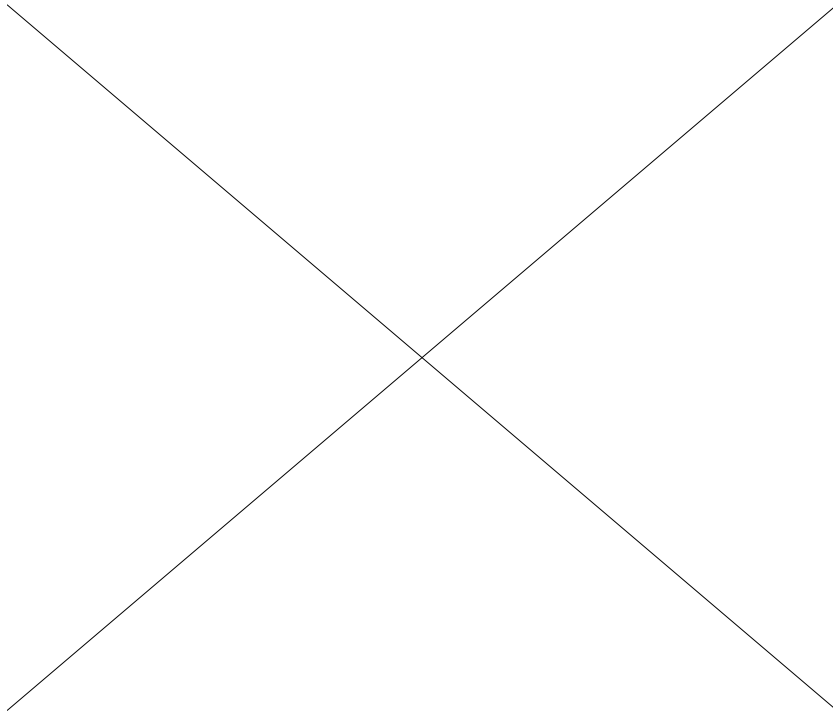
Akey signed the Duncans' football once he made it into the dome. The couple said another reason they came down to Moscow from Coeur d'Alene is it's not every day you can get a football signed by Akey.

"He's just as funny in person as he is on TV," Lois said.

Once the crowds settled into the dome, the football team was congratulated with remarks by UI Athletic Director Rob Spear, Moscow Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Steve Hacker, Moscow City Council Chairman Wayne Krauss and Akey.

Akey thanked fans for their support and praised the football players for their hard work.

"We can't wait to get started on next year," he said. "We're going to have ourselves a ball."



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