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Scenes from a D3 Football Game, SJU vs. Thomas More University

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Quad 136



Scenes from a D3 Football Game, SJU vs. Thomas More University



Image gojohnnies.com

The game starts gray and cold. The temperature is in the low 20s, and there is a noticeable breeze. Light snow is falling, but the weather forecast says it shouldn't last. Alas, the weather forecast is wrong, and the snow picks up. By late in the second quarter, the field is white. A guy with a shovel on the sideline keeps running out every few plays to clear a two foot wide path so the

players can see the goal line. The teams play on, oblivious, even seeming to enjoy sliding tackles and diving for passes, cushioned by a few inches of powder.

Half-time arrives. Every November, during the football game closest to Veterans Day, we honor the services of men and women in the Armed Forces. We invite an active duty alumnus back to be honored and to represent all the alumni and fans who have served. This year, the brigadier general waits quietly on the sideline as time winds down. Once the second quarter ends, many of the Johnnies, rather than heading right for the locker room on a chilly day, take a detour to shake this alum's hand and thank him for his service. He is surprised and touched by this gesture. Later that afternoon, he leaves his alma mater feeling uplifted and hopeful for the future.



Image Jennifer McNelly

The field is now covered in snow, and the athletic director and assistant director have a problem. They have to figure out how to clear the field during halftime. Shovels are rounded up and handed out to a small crew of student workers. And then, a bit like the parable of the loaves and fishes, other students, attending as fans, come out of the stands and ask for shovels too. The group – including many practiced Minnesotans – sets to work, and the field is clear by the time the players return. The athletic staff are tickled pink. Burgers and brats are rounded up to feed the crew, and the hungry students think they've been fed at a Michelin two-star restaurant.

The final gun sounds, and the two teams make their way across the field toward each other. Suddenly two or three Johnnies are on the ground, on their backs. Those in the press box look at each other perplexed. Then they smile. The players are making snow angels on the field.



Image @ccarrIX via Twitter

The stadium is largely empty as two visiting fans make their way through the home team's bleachers. The visiting team came over 1500 miles on a bus, and these visiting parents drove almost that same distance. Had the game turned out differently, the visitors might have had a chance at making the playoffs, but these parents are not disappointed. They had gotten to see their son play his last college football game in a beautiful setting. As they moved toward the exit, they said that their son had always wanted to play a game in the snow, but since his college is in Kentucky, that had never happened, until today. They think it was a sweetly fitting note on which to end his college career. The offensive lineman's father says, "We will be cheering for the Johnnies in the playoffs. It would be great for our son to be able to say that his last game was played in the snow against the eventual national champions."



Image gojohnnies.com

One of the Johnnies is interviewed about the game. After some questions about the playoffs, he is asked what it was like to play in these weather conditions. He smiles delightedly and says, "It was like being a kid again and playing snow football in your backyard."

How many D1 football players had as much fun in their games before tens of thousands in the

stadium and hundreds of thousands of TV viewers? I'd venture to say not very many.

By [Michael Hemesath](#) | November 13th, 2018 | Categories: [Alumni](#), [Kudos](#) | [0 Comments](#)

