

Greenwood honored at Heart of Gold Gala

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Every year, the American Heart Association holds an annual event at Kinnick Stadium called the Iowa City Heart of Gold Gala. At this event, thousands of dollars are raised through auctions that go towards cardiovascular research being done by the organization.

Its 2013 Gala took place Friday evening and this year's event hit home with the Iowa football program.

Former Iowa football players such as Pat Angerer, Mitch King, Joe Conklin and Taylor Herbst were among those on hand Friday to not help raise money and awareness for the American Heart Association, but also show support towards Brett Greenwood, who was selected as the Gala's Hawkeye Heart Hero honoree.

More than 18 months have passed since Greenwood suffered what was later discovered as an anoxic brain injury back in Sept. 2011, something he's still rehabilitating from today. Greenwood was honored at the Gala and was originally scheduled to appear publicly at the event. While he was unable to attend, his girlfriend and both of his parents were on hand.

Greenwood's absence wasn't going to keep his former teammates from showing up though. Angerer was contacted by Greenwood's girlfriend about being the Gala's guest speaker and said he "jumped at the chance" and called it, "the biggest honor of his career being able to speak on Brett's behalf."

Once Angerer was on board, he began contacting teammates about showing up. King said once he got Angerer's call, he made it a

priority to be back for someone he grew to respect during their three years as teammates together and beyond.

"He was a quiet individual and he kept to himself a lot, but you knew as soon as he walked in the door, he was going to work hard until the day he left the university," King said. "You got to respect a person like that. He kept his backyard clean. He wasn't a guy out causing trouble or causing ruckus.

"You could count on Brett for anything, whether it was on the field or off the field. He was a great guy, a great teammate and I think Brett was one of the smarter football players that I played with."

Conklin and Angerer both recalled competing against Greenwood in high school before they all became teammates at Iowa, as all three hailed from the Quad Cities area.

"We always had a fun little rivalry," said Conklin, who played alongside Greenwood in the Iowa secondary for three seasons. "But when we got up to Iowa, I played with him and I played behind him. He was just a great guy to be in the same room with and learn from, be able to bounce ideas and the kind of scouting reports back and forth off each other.

"He's just a great teammate and guy and I have the utmost respect for him. I'm so glad to be here for him."

Both King and Conklin said they've had limited contact with Greenwood. Conklin said he'd get updates through family friends regarding Greenwood's health and has recently been able to be in touch with him more frequently as a result of Friday's Heart of Gold Gala. As for King, he said he has been able to get updates through other channels, whether it was Greenwood's girlfriend or through the coaching staff at Iowa.

Angerer, who will be entering his fourth season in the NFL this fall playing linebacker for the Indianapolis Colts, said he saw Greenwood this past Thursday (March 28) and that it was

their first encounter with each other since Greenwood's accident first took place.

"It was real refreshing seeing him [Thursday] and seeing his strength and just watching him," Angerer said. "He has still got that same squirrely personality. It's tough because he can do so much with his life.

"There are still a lot of positives left that he can do and the sky's the limit with him. It still is."

For these guys, the opportunity to reunite to Kinnick Stadium (albeit in a different capacity) was one worthwhile, especially with many others that came out to show the same love for Brett Greenwood they had for him when they played together for the Hawkeyes.

"He may never really understand how much of an impact he has on people," Angerer said. "But he's just such an inspiration for everybody. Just a flawless person."