



## *Kubiak, Texans Offer Salute to Military*

By Nick Scurfield

Head coach Gary Kubiak and the Texans are proud to pay tribute to the armed services today at Reliant Stadium.



In the Texans' annual Salute to the Military, the team is honoring servicemen and women throughout today's game, capped off by an appearance by the nation's former Commander in Chief, President George H.W. Bush.

For Texans head coach Gary Kubiak, it's more than a once-a-year event. Since 2007, Kubiak has dedicated time in the offseason to participate in the Impact A Hero 5k Run/Walk/Wheel event for seriously wounded and disabled veterans of the War on Terror.

The event, which features a 5k run, 1k kids' walk and a wheelchair race, is hosted each May in Sugar Land by Impact Player Partners. The organization was founded in Cincinnati by its current president Dick Lynch to provide emotional and financial support for wounded veterans who have returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

It's a cause that Kubiak is honored to be a part of.

"That's the ultimate sacrifice for your country, what those guys do," Kubiak said. "We as a football team, a coaching staff and an organization have tremendous respect for them."

Over the past two years, Kubiak has become somewhat of an unofficial spokesperson for Impact A

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*— Impact Player Partners founder and president Dick Lynch*

Hero in Houston. After being moved by his first experience with the event in 2007, Kubiak invited two Iraq War veterans he'd met, Paul Brondraver and Rick Yarosh, to visit with the team at an offseason practice this spring.

Yarosh is severely burned on more than 60 percent of his body, and Brondraver lost his best friend in the line of duty. The two veterans spoke to the players about their conviction toward their country and toward the concept of teamwork, a discussion that made a lasting impression on the team.

At Kubiak's encouragement, nearly two dozen Texans players and coaches and general manager Rick

Smith attended this year's event, which raised approximately \$115,000 for veteran services.

The Texans' involvement helped to increase the number of participants in the run from about 750 in 2007 to almost 1,300 in 2008, making it the largest of Impact Player Partners' national events.

"Having Coach Kubiak and the Houston Texans participate is of huge importance," Lynch said. "The wounded heroes are in attendance, and they see Coach Kubiak and the Texans come out for them and it makes them feel appreciated because most of these guys and gals go from the battlefield to a hospital in Iraq to a hospital in Germany to a hospital in the United States."

Kubiak became involved with Impact A Hero after an invitation from Kim Phillips, his executive assistant, who serves on the planning committee for the event.

"I didn't know much about it but wanted to help her out, and it's funny how things like that end up being a blessing in life because it's been great," Kubiak said. "I've met so many tremendous young men, women and families who have served our country, and it's been special."





“Just to see all those kids that have served our country and the price that they’ve paid for our country, to go out there and spend some time with them, I’ve really, really enjoyed it.”

Kubiak has a strong sense of the importance of honoring the sacrifices of individuals in the armed services. His nephew, Michael, is stationed in Georgia in the midst of serving three tours of duty in Iraq with the U.S. Army.

“I think a lot of times in life, there’s people that call athletes heroes and people that are involved in sports their heroes,” Kubiak said. “But I tell you what, if you’re around those kids (in the military) for a few minutes, if they’re not your heroes, something’s wrong.”

“We got some more guys involved this year, got a few players, a few more coaches, and hopefully the event continues to grow and it’s successful.”

Participating players this spring included quarterback Matt Schaub, center Chris Myers, cornerback Antwaun Molden, wide receiver Harry Williams, defensive tackle Jeff Zgonina, tackle Brandon Frye, defensive tackle DeJuan Robinson and quarterback Alex Brink.

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Close to half of the Texans' coaching staff attended, including special teams coordinator Joe Marciano, offensive line coach John Benton, senior defensive assistant Frank Bush, running backs coach Chick Harris, defensive backs coach Jon Hoke, linebackers coach Johnny Holland, wide receivers coach Larry Kirksey, special teams assistant Richard Hightower and defensive assistant Robert Saleh.

The players signed autographs and mingled with the veterans at the Saturday morning event, and some of the Texans – such as Kubiak and Molden – ran in

the 5k race. Smith participated in the 1k kids' walk with his son, Bobby.

When this year's event ran longer into the afternoon hours than expected, Kubiak stayed late as well. Lynch said that even though Kubiak's son had a football game that day that the coach was planning to attend, Kubiak decided to miss some of the game to make sure that he met all of the veterans.

“I have all the respect in the world for him,” Lynch said. “That speaks volumes about him. That’s just huge. Anything that we’ve ever asked or requested from Coach Kubiak and the Texans has been met not only with a yes, but a yes and a smile and ‘Yes, we want to do more.’”

For Kubiak, it's important that the Texans – just like they do each May at the Impact A Hero event in Sugar Land – are today offering a deserving Salute to the Military.

“What we’re doing as an organization is showing our respect for those young men and women and families and what they do for our country,” he said. “I have tremendous respect for those people and what they do.”



**Find out more about Impact Player Partners and its Impact A Hero events by visiting the organization's website at [www.ImpactAHero.org](http://www.ImpactAHero.org).**

