



For Immediate Release

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*For more information: Jessica Manning
713-552-1055 or 713-398-2525*

Football's Finest Hour Returns to the Bayou City

Houston to Host College Football's Best at the 84th Annual East-West Shrine Game

Houston, TX – Football and philanthropy are at the center of the 84th Annual East-West Shrine Game, which is set for Jan. 17, 2009, in Houston, Texas, at the University of Houston's Robertson Stadium.

The football match-up, which began in 1925, features many of the best college players in the U.S. and Canada, divided by region but coming together to raise money for the children receiving care at the 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children across the North America.

This year's event features two storied head coaches, Bobby Ross and Gene Stallings, who will be leading the teams for bi-coastal bragging rights.

Gene Stallings brings 18 years of NFL experience to this year's game, as well as an impressive record as a college head coach. Bobby Ross also comes to the sidelines with an outstanding NFL and college football resume, including leading the San Diego Chargers to Super Bowl XXIX.

The coaches aren't the only big names associated with the East-West Shrine Game. A total of 62 Shrine Game alumni, from Dick Butkus to Joe Greene to Gale Sayers, are featured in the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. And each year, the game adds football's future stars to its extensive roster.

"The East-West Shrine Game has always fielded college football's best and offered a great way for the talent of tomorrow to be showcased for the public, as well as NFL scouts," said Jack Hart, executive director of the East-West Shrine Game. "Last year's game featured 44 players who were chosen in the 2008 NFL draft. This is big-time football being coached by NFL pros, which, when combined with the wonderful cause of helping the kids in the Shriners Hospitals, makes this the most prestigious college all-star football game in America."

But, it's not just the list of players who have participated over the years that makes this game "Football's Finest Hour." The Shrine Game's true purpose - helping to support Shriners Hospital for Children - is what sets this event apart from all others.

Since 1925, the Shrine Game has been played to raise money and to increase public awareness of Shriners Hospitals for Children, an international health care system of 22 hospitals dedicated to providing pediatric specialty care, innovative research and outstanding teaching programs. Children up to age 18 with orthopaedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate are eligible for care and receive all services at no charge – regardless of financial need. More than 865,000 young patients have received state-of-the-art care at Shriners Hospitals. Two of those hospitals are in Houston and Galveston, Texas.

Ralph Semb, president and CEO of Shriners Hospitals for Children, said, "This game is Shriners' 'Window to the World.' It is our moment of time each year to present what we are all about on national television, giving us the opportunity to create an awareness that will allow us to care for more children. It is a great venue to promote our mission of providing specialty health care for children, and at the same time gives our members a chance to become involved and have fun."

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Shriners Hospitals for Children relies on the generous donations of Shriners and the general public to carry out our mission and change the lives of children every day. To date, the East-West Shrine Game has raised millions of dollars for Shriners Hospitals and has helped inform millions of people about the mission of this extraordinary philanthropy.

WHAT: 84th Annual East-West Shrine Game

WHO: Top NCAA College Football Players

WHERE: University of Houston, Robertson Stadium, Houston, Texas

Televised on ESPN2

WHEN: Saturday, Jan. 17, 2009

3 p.m. CST Kick Off

HOW: Tickets go on sale Oct. 27, 2008

INFORMATION: www.shrinegame.com