

State's football coaches gather for charitable cause



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(Photo: Manie Robinson / Staff)

In about a month, Furman University's Bruce Fowler and Wofford College's Mike Ayers will begin another struggle for position in the Southern Conference. They will contend with South Carolina State's Buddy Pough and The Citadel's Brent Thompson for spots in the playoffs. Clemson's Dabo Swinney and South Carolina's Will Muschamp will open another quest for championships and bragging rights.

However, on Tuesday night, the coaches suspended their rivalries and shared the same stage, because they all share the same stance on goodwill.

Six of the state's Division I head coaches participated in South Carolina Coaches for Charity at the Hyatt Regency in Downtown Greenville. The annual event was initiated seven years ago by South Carolina native and former Air Force coach Fisher DeBerry.

In addition to their respective schools, the coaches raised awareness and funds for their sponsored charities. The causes included Chris and Kelly's Hope which assists adolescents and young adults who struggle with substance abuse, addiction and depression, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Brookland-Lakeview Empowerment Center and Dabo's All-In Team Foundation, which supports breast cancer research and educational enrichment programs.

"I'm thankful for the coaches we have in this state and for their willingness to get behind this event," Swinney said. "I think it's important, because it just says that people are paying attention. It shows the difference you can make by using your platform in a positive way."

Muschamp asserted that coaches have a duty to utilize their influence to improve the communities they represent.

"The platform you have...is a huge responsibility," he said. "It's something that I take very seriously and want to improve our state."

Coaches also presented five Community MVP Awards. Honorees included Orangeburg resident Doug Tourville, Greenville businessman Foster McKissick, former South Carolina player Sheldon Brown, Furman offensive coordinator Tim Sorrells and Clemson junior quarterback Deshaun Watson.

"I can't think of a better one than Deshaun Watson. First of all, what he means to Clemson, what he has meant to this entire community, this state," Swinney said of his nominee, citing Watson's work with Habitat for Humanity. "He was an easy pick for me, and it's a good way to embrace him and continue to encourage him to be the great example that he is and hopefully encourage others."

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