Organization that Battles Homophobia in Sports to be Honored with Santa Clara University’s ETHOS Award for Ethics in Sport

SANTA CLARA, Calif., April 2, 2015 — Santa Clara University’s Institute of Sports Law and Ethics (ISLE) will award its third-annual ETHOS Award for contributions to ethics in sports to You Can Play, an organization whose mission is ensuring equality, respect and safety for all athletes without regard to sexual orientation.

You Can Play is a Denver-based organization that works to guarantee that athletes of any sexual orientation are given a fair opportunity to compete, judged only by what they contribute to the sport or their team’s success. The organization recruits straight and gay athletes to spread the message of fairness, changing the conversation and landscape toward one of inclusion for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) athletes. Along with partners, You Can Play has helped establish the world’s first LGBT sports camp for inner city youth.

Supported by individual, corporate and foundation donors, You Can Play and its affiliates have released an average of one video a week supporting LGBT equality in sports. The videos have been shown to schools, league trainings, and national outlets. The organization helps support online “Take a Stand” petitions and influence team captains to sign a “Captain’s Challenge” pledging to respect all players, promote acceptance and speak up against slurs. You Can Play has recruited supportive players from numerous teams and sports, including one from every NHL team in the league. You Can Play co-founder Brian Kitts addressed the United Nations Human Rights Council last year.

The $5,000 award will be presented at a 6 p.m. dinner at Santa Clara University’s Adobe Lodge on May 6. Representatives of major Bay Area sports organizations, including the San Jose Sharks and the Oakland A’s, are expected to be in attendance at the event.
Interested media may attend by RSVP’ing to Deborah Lohse of SCU Media Relations (dlohse@scu.edu).

Two founding leaders of You Can Play will accept the award:

*Wade Davis*, executive director of You Can Play, who is a retired NFL player and one of the few professional athletes to be openly gay. Davis played college football at Weber State before spending four years with NFL practice squads and in NFL Europe. He’s a former LGBT surrogate for President Barack Obama and currently an adjunct professor at NYU. A member of HBO’s “Out List”, Davis has written for the New York Times, Huffington Post, The Guardian, and other major media outlets.

*Patrick Burke*, co-founder of You Can Play, is director of player safety for the NHL and a former scout for the Philadelphia Flyers. Burke’s younger brother Brendan came out as a gay professional hockey player before being killed in an auto accident in 2010. Burke took up Brendan’s cause by founding You Can Play to provide resources, training and support to LGBT athletes, coaches, and fans.

“ISLE is extremely pleased to honor this organization, whose important work is underscored by recent legislation in Indiana, Arkansas, and elsewhere that seeks to provide legal cover for discriminatory behavior,” said Ron Katz, chairman of the Institute for Sports Law and Ethics at Santa Clara University.

The ETHOS prize is an annual award honoring a decision, action, initiative, or program that has contributed to the ethics of sport in the United States. “Ethics of sport” refers to the adherence to rules and practices or structures that promote fair opportunity for all competitors, a concern for safety of all participants, and a focus on the positive impact of sport on American life and on the moral formation of all participants.

**About You Can Play**
You Can Play is dedicated to ensuring equality, respect and safety for all athletes, without regard to sexual orientation and gender identity. You Can Play works to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete and judged only by other athletes and fans alike, only by what they contribute to the sport or their team’s success. You Can Play seeks to challenge the culture of locker rooms and spectator areas by focusing only on an athlete’s skills, work ethic and competitive spirit. For more information see [youcanplayproject.org](http://youcanplayproject.org).

**About the Institute of Sports Law and Ethics**
The Institute of Sports Law and Ethics was founded by the Santa Clara School of Law, SCU Athletic Department, and the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. Its 25-member board includes distinguished athletes and sports executives. The institute’s signature event is an annual Symposium on Sports Law and Ethics in September, covering subjects such as concussions, steroids, amateurism, and the commercial use of athletes’ images. In 2012 ISLE added a community outreach component, established the ETHOS Award, and created a task force to study amateurism. For more information see law.scu.edu/sportslaw.

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