

Krenzel, Kern Help Local Charity

By Eric Loughry

Early in his first day as a former Ohio State quarterback, Craig Krenzel met with the last OSU signal caller before him to lead the Buckeyes to a national championship.

The morning following his last game in scarlet and gray — a 35-28 win over Kansas State in the 2004 Fiesta Bowl Jan. 4 — Krenzel had breakfast with Rex Kern, who was under center when OSU defeated Southern California in the 1969 Rose Bowl to claim the 1968 national title.

More than three decades would pass before the 2002 OSU team, quarterbacked by Krenzel, would win the national title with a 31-24 double-overtime win over Miami (Fla.) in the 2003 Fiesta Bowl.

Krenzel and Kern have been linked ever since. Kern even found his way down to the postgame interview area following OSU's national championship win to congratulate Krenzel, who like Kern before him was the MVP of the bowl game that decided the national title.

Krenzel was again the offensive MVP of the Fiesta Bowl his senior season. Hours later, he met with Kern, who had a proposition for him.

Kern had an idea on how to utilize the connection between the two and showed Krenzel a print featuring both of them. The focal point is an image taken of the two together following the 2003 Fiesta Bowl.

Kern asked Krenzel if he would be interested in signing, along with Kern, each limited-edition print titled "The Quarterbacks," with an allotment of the proceeds benefiting the Miracle for Madison and Friends Fund. Krenzel was well aware of the charity.

Carl Reed, a former OSU wrestler, and his wife, Annette, started the foundation after their daughter, Madison, was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) in 1997 at the age of four months. Madison had Type 1, the most severe form of SMA, the leading genetic killer of children under the age of 2.

The Reeds created Madison's fund to support research for SMA and develop a clinic at OSU specializing in the disease.

"Carl and his wife, Annette, have put their lives on hold and done so many great things to start up this Miracle for Madison foundation,"

Krenzel said. "When Rex approached me to do this print, I figured it was the least that I could do — the least that we could do — to make some money and donate to Miracle for Madison."

Krenzel unveiled the print March 6 at the sixth annual Madison's Angels at the End Zone, a fundraiser held at the Buckeye Hall of Fame Cafe.

Also on hand was Dorsey Nicholson, who painted the original. Kern was scheduled to attend and be an honorary co-chairperson for the event but had to cancel because of recurring back trouble.

A limited-edition football with an image and autographs of both quarterbacks also will be available.

A portion of the proceeds from both the print and the ball will be donated to the fund on behalf of Kern and Krenzel through Rex Kren Enterprises.

Chris Cole, vice president of Horseshoe Legends, Ltd., which is responsible for the sales and distribution of the products, said that his company would match that total.

In a silent auction later in the evening, an autographed print sold for \$4,600, the highest price ever spent for an item in the six years of the event. More than \$430,000 was raised in the event's first five years.

The print features images of Kern receiving instructions from legendary coach Woody Hayes and Krenzel listening to OSU coach Jim Tressel.

"It's kind of eerie," Carl Reed said. "It's the eerie coincidence of Rex, of Craig, of Tress, of Coach Hayes.

"It's something magical there. We believe in magic — that's our theme."

Madison was not expected to live past the age of 2. She turned 7 Feb. 4 and was at the event.

Reed, a teacher at nearby Dublin Coffman High School, credited his wife, a registered nurse, for her constant care of Madison.

"It's a diligent program that you have to follow to keep her healthy with her breathing and secretions, keeping her clear," he said. "And my wife, if she's not eligible for sainthood, nobody is.

"She does an amazing job day in and day out, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And we've got a few good nurses that help and that my daughter and my wife are both comfortable with."

Also present when Krenzel unveiled the print was his predecessor as OSU quarterback, Steve Bellisari.

"Steve did a lot, too, for the foundation," Carl Reed said. "And I just want to say thanks to him and Craig."

It was Bellisari, in fact, who told Krenzel about Miracle for Madison.

"Steve's actually the reason that I got involved," Krenzel said. "He did it his freshman year and then when I got here as a freshman, I was real good friends with him. And he got me to come along, and we've been doing it ever since."

Along with the quarterbacks, Carl Reed mentioned departed tight end Ben Hartsock and defensive tackle Tim Anderson for their efforts.

"It's been Ben, it's been Steve, it's been Craig and it's been Tim Anderson," he said. "That's kind of been the core of guys that have always been there for us, coming at night, going for dinner."

But many OSU players are involved, particularly with the Madison's Angels in the End Zone fundraiser. Carl Reed counted 61 Buckeyes available for pictures and autographs March 6.

He credited Tressel for the willingness and eagerness of players to volunteer their time.

For the 2001 spring game, the first under Tressel, a portion of the ticket sales went to the Miracle for Madison fund, along with the Stefanie Spielman Fund for Breast Cancer Research. Reed will occasionally drop items off at Tressel's office for the coach to sign for auctions.

"You can just tell that there's great things going on with Coach Tressel's program," he said.