

Proposed Criteria for Modern Retirement of Tennessee Football Numbers

Tennessee's storied football tradition has been built from great team performances, outstanding individual effort, inspired coaching and leadership and tremendous fan support. Six national championships, 12 SEC championships, and one of the most famed and largest of all football stadiums mark the true essence of Volunteer football. Individually, 68 players have earned All-America honors, seven have been named SEC player of the year, and 20 have earned lifetime distinction as inductees into the College Football Hall of Fame, while hundreds more have gone onto outstanding professional careers, further spreading the gospel of Tennessee Football.

With so many wonderful and memorable great players, the University has chosen to this point to reserve the ultimate honor of jersey number retirement for four players killed in action in World War II.

With close examination of the history and accomplishment of the men who have worn the Orange for 100 years, the following criteria have been established to allow for the fitting recognition of a few UT men, whose legendary standing in the history of the game of football, while rooted in their accomplishments on the Hill, truly can be said to have transcended both the borders of Tennessee and the boundary lines of Shield-Watkins field to unparalleled recognition throughout the United States of America.

Be it then, that only by unanimous recommendation of the Committee identified below, and coupled with demonstrated achievements as listed, and finally, ratified by a unanimous vote of the Athletics Board of the University of Tennessee, shall football jersey numbers worn by qualifying Volunteer football players be permanently retired and displayed with the honor befitting their representation of the accomplishments of all who have come before and since.

1. The Committee shall consist of the Director of Men's Athletics, the President of The University of Tennessee, the Chairman of the Athletics Committee of the Board of Trustees, and the President of the UT Letterman's Association (T-Club).
2. Candidates may be nominated and brought before the Committee. The Committee shall meet to determine qualifications of candidates and determine whether or not to formally recommend the candidate for approval by the Athletics Board. Such recommendation may only be by unanimous Committee vote.
3. Candidates must be recognized as good citizens who have brought distinction to the University and themselves through their accomplishments on and off the football field, both in the days on the Hill and in their post-UT careers.
4. A minimum of five years must pass between the conclusion of a candidate's UT football career and consideration for this honor.
5. Candidates must not have achieved greater fame or identity from another institution or University.
6. A candidate must have achieved THREE of the following five collegiate honors:
 - a. Induction into the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame.
 - b. Southeastern Conference (SEC) Player of the Year.
 - c. Consensus All-America.
 - d. Heisman Trophy winner.
 - e. Have won one of the following general athletic/academic or non-position specific awards: Sullivan Award, SEC Athlete of the Year (all sports) or Draddy Award.

7. Recognizing the tremendous collective impact of Tennessee Volunteers in professional football, candidates must have also achieved THREE of the following four professional distinctions:
 - a. Induction into the NFL Hall of Fame.
 - b. NFL offensive or defensive MVP.
 - c. Achieved Pro Bowl status in 5 seasons.
 - d. Holder of a major career or season statistical record (yards, sacks, tackles, touchdowns scored or thrown).
8. Candidates who have been enshrined in both the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL Hall of Fame will receive strong consideration for number retirement.
9. Candidates must meet or exceed these defined criteria to be considered for recommendation and approval for number retirement.
10. For modification of these criteria for number retirement, the suggested modification must be unanimously approved by the committee and forwarded to the Athletics Board at its Fall meeting. Unanimous vote of the Athletics Board members must ratify said modification.
11. The department of athletics shall conduct the number retirement ceremony with all due pomp and circumstance, preferably in conjunction with a home football game in Neyland Stadium.
12. Retired numbers could be reactivated with the permission of the athlete or his surviving family member's approval.

These criteria and regulations pertaining to the retirement of football numbers for the University of Tennessee Volunteers have been approved by the Athletics Board and the President and Chancellor of the University this 12th day of November, 2005.

President, The University of Tennessee

Chancellor, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Chairperson, UTK Athletics Board

Chairman, Athletics Committee of the Board of Trustees

Director of Men's Athletics

President, Lettermen's Club