



Drew Bledsoe.



Damon Huard.

SPOTLIGHT

Renewing an Apple Cup Rivalry

Former quarterbacks vie for winemaking glory **BY BUDDY LEVY**

ON NOVEMBER 21, four days before the annual Apple Cup football game between the University of Washington Huskies and Washington State University Cougars, former star college quarterbacks Drew Bledsoe and Damon Huard will renew a competition of their own.

The two friends and winemakers will be throwing down their finest vintages and exchanging a little smack talk with friends and fans at their second-annual Apple Cup Gourmet Rivalry Dinner, to be held at Daniel's Broiler in Bellevue, Washington.

Bledsoe, who played for the Cougars from 1990 to 1993, will be pouring a 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon from his Doubleback Winery, based in his hometown of Walla Walla in Eastern Washington. Huard, who played for the Huskies from 1991 to 1995, will counter with his own 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon from his Passing Time winery, based in Woodinville, near Seattle. They will bring a spirited sense of competition, camaraderie and one-upmanship to the event.

The NFL's first overall draft pick in 1993 for the New England Patriots, Bledsoe played 14 years as a pro. However, he maintains that the 1992 Apple Cup, famously called the Snow Bowl in Pullman, remains his favorite football game.

"We beat the Huskies 42–23," Bledsoe says. "All Damon could do was watch from the sidelines—he was backup to [quarterback] Mark Brunell."

Huard played 12 seasons in the NFL, including a few years as backup to Miami Dolphins Hall of Fame

quarterback Dan Marino, who later became a partner in Passing Time. "Danny introduced me to wines," Huard says. "We'd go down in his cellar, and I'd see all these wines from my home state of Washington. I had no idea our state produced such amazing wines! Marino helped me refine my palate."

Bledsoe and Huard both played for the Patriots in 2001. While Bledsoe was injured that season and lost his starting job to Tom Brady, the team did go on to win the Super Bowl. Bledsoe remembers that he and Huard would spend a lot of time that season talking about wine, even sketching potential wine label designs in their Patriots playbooks.

After retiring, both Bledsoe and Huard came back to Washington and started wineries. Bledsoe launched Doubleback in 2007. Huard began Passing Time in 2011.

When it comes to wine quality, the two rivals may have to settle for a tie. Doubleback's 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon scored 95 points (out of 100) from Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate*. Passing Time's 2013 Horse Heaven Hills Cabernet Sauvignon garnered a score of 96 from Parker. With an insignificant one-point difference, both Bledsoe and Huard agree that when it comes to wine, there needn't be a winner.

Now, when it comes to this year's Apple Cup, that's a different story. "The Cougars are going to *destroy* the Dawgs," boasts Bledsoe.

Counters Huard: "The Cougars were supposed to win last year and we saw how that turned out, enough said!"