

PASSING TIME



For immediate release

Ex-NFL quarterbacks Dan Marino and Damon Huard race onto Washington wine's playing field with Passing Time

Former teammates follow 15-year old vision to make Washington's next great cabernet

SEATTLE (May 28, 2014) – The idea behind Passing Time, the new winery project from former NFL quarterbacks Dan Marino and Damon Huard, is much more than just a passing thought.

In fact, it has been 15 years in the making.

“The vision of making a truly great Washington wine is one that Damon and I have shared for a long time,” said Marino, one of the most decorated quarterbacks in NFL history and a member of the NFL’s Hall of Fame. “Although there are more than 800 wineries in Washington State, we believe the industry is still in its adolescence and we want to be part of it as it grows into the world’s next great wine region.”

With Passing Time, Marino, Huard and their two partners, Seattle businessmen Kevin Hughes and Doug Donnelly, are aspiring to make the finest cabernet sauvignon in Washington State using fruit from the state’s most storied vineyards.

The partners officially launched the brand this week when the Passing Time website (www.passingtime.com) went live, enabling people to pre-order the wines in advance of the wine’s release in 2015. They also hosted a private party in downtown Seattle to celebrate the Passing Time launch with family, friends and business associates.

“We are very excited about the initial reception for Passing Time,” Huard said. “We had our initial orders within hours after the website went live and we’ve had a steady stream of people signing up for the mailing list.”

The wine will be bottled in June and released in late 2015, Huard said. The winery’s first release will be 500 cases and may eventually grow to 1,000 cases.

The spark for Passing Time ignited in Marino’s living room in 1997 when the veteran Miami Dolphins’ quarterback invited Huard, then a second-year quarterback with the team, over to his house for drinks.

“Damon was strictly a rum-and-Coke guy,” Marino said. “I said to him, ‘Man, you’re from Washington State. Don’t you know they have some incredible wines out there? You have no idea what you’re missing.’ ”

Marino started to share bottles from his cellar – Quilceda Creek, Woodward Canyon, Andrew Will and others – and Huard was smitten. Although Marino retired from the NFL in 1999 and Huard left Miami to play for other teams, the two continued to talk about their mutual love for Washington wine. The conversation eventually evolved into a discussion about starting a winery.

“The talk got very serious and at one point, we even explored the possibility of buying a beautiful piece of vineyard land in the Horse Heaven Hills with Drew Bledsoe (another NFL quarterback),” Huard said. “We didn’t pull the trigger on that deal and ironically, we are now sourcing some of our best fruit from that property.”

The 2012 vintage of Passing Time is primarily cabernet sauvignon from ‘that property,’ better known as Discovery Vineyard, one of the state’s most acclaimed new vineyards. The cabernet sauvignon leads the way with 86 percent and is blended with a healthy 9 percent dollop of merlot from Klipsun Vineyard on Red Mountain. The remainder of the blend is robust Cab Franc from the famed Champoux Vineyard near Prosser.

“My family has deep roots in and around Prosser,” Huard said. “So it’s very satisfying to me to be working with long-time family friends like Paul Champoux who support our vision for Passing Time.”

With the fruit sources in place, the partners engaged Chris Peterson as the winemaker for Passing Time. Peterson is a partner with Marty Taucher at Avennia, a Washington winery that has generated incredible recognition and buzz since its debut in 2011. In fact, Avennia’s 2010 Arnaut Syrah was named 2013 Washington Red Wine of the Year by *Seattle* magazine.

“Chris understands what we want to accomplish with Passing Time and his winemaking style is very complimentary to our vision for the wine,” Huard said. “We are very fortunate to have him on board as our winemaker.”

Passing Time is being made at Avennia’s production facility in Woodinville.

Passing Time may seem like an obvious name for a wine brand that includes two former NFL quarterbacks as partners, but it wasn’t that easy, Marino said.

“My wife Claire came up with the original name, but like most men, we thought it was too soft and were sure we could do better,” he said. “We spent a lot of time trying, but when we saw the label design that subtly resembles the eight laces on a football as well as other images, we knew it was right.

“There’s the subtle football reference. When it’s fourth down in the red zone and you’re down by six with seconds left, it’s ‘Passing Time.’ And when you’re enjoying a bottle of great wine with good friends, it’s just Passing Time. We think it’s the perfect metaphor for the wine, and we can’t wait to share it with wine lovers who share our passion for great wine.”

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