

Columbia inducts 1st class into Hall of Honor

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By Joel Luna | 0 comments

WEST COLUMBIA — Dating to its start, the Columbia High School athletics program has produced many great athletes and coaches.

Now, many of those former standouts will have a place to reside in memory instead of just old newspaper clippings.

The Hall of Honor for Athletics had its first induction class before Friday night's matchup between Columbia and Needville. Inducted as the first class were former coaches Lois Knipling Peel, Charlie Brand and former football standouts Charlie Davis, Jim Ray Smith, Dennis Gaubatz and Charlie Johnson.

“We started thinking about doing something like this two years ago,” organizer Dwight Richey said. “I couldn't think of any two coaches that deserved it more because they were so respected for their achievements. As for the players I was thinking, who has made it to the big time from West Columbia and those four guys needed to come in.”

Peel arrived at Columbia High School in 1958 after graduating from Texas Lutheran College. A track and field coach, Peel guided nine athletes to first-place finishes at the state track meet.

Those winning gold were Darlene Thomas (1971, 60-yard hurdles; 1972, 60-yard hurdles, 80-yard hurdles, long jump) Margo Diggs (1971, 100-yard dash), Willene Williams (1974, 60-yard dash), Sharion Higgins (1976, triple jump), Sheila Williams (1978, 80-yard hurdles) and Rhonda Bonner (1978, long jump).

Besides coaching individual gold medalists, Peel also had eight relay teams win first place. From 1972 to 1975 the 400-meter and 800-meter relay teams won gold medals with the 1974 squad of Higgins, Diggs, Earlene Thomas and Williams setting the national record in both events.

The 1972 track and field team won the team title at the state meet.

Peel also coached basketball and had the 1975 and 1976 zone champion and in 1978, in her final year of coaching, had a region finalist. She remained at the school in a teaching capacity until 1991.

Brand graduated in 1953 as a Roughneck, finishing his high school career as a five-sport letterman. He and his tennis partner won district all four years he played, competing at the state meet each year and reaching the quarterfinals.

He also was a 1952 all-district football performer.

As a tennis coach, Brand produced five state champions, including Bob Farmer, 1962; Van Manning, 1976; Joe Langner, 1978; Clark Woodson, 1985; and Kelly Hay, 1991. In 29 years of

coaching tennis, Brand sent at least one player to the state meet each year. He finished with three fall team tennis titles and in the spring had four girls' titles and one boys' title.

In 2004, the Columbia-Brazoria ISD dedicated the Charlie Brand Tennis Complex in his honor. That same year, he was nominated to the Texas Tennis Hall of Fame.

As a football coach for 32 years, Brand helped the 1969 Roughnecks reach the state finals in Class 3A, losing to Brownwood, 34-16. Eighteen years later, Columbia reached the quarterfinals. In his honor, the C-BISD Athletics Booster Club gives an annual scholarship.

A student from 1955-58 at Columbia, Gaubatz was all-county and all-district football in his final two years, playing linebacker for the Roughnecks. He also participated in track and field, competing at the state meet as a senior in the high jump and mile relay.

After high school Gaubatz headed to LSU and played for the Tigers from 1959-62 and was named Second-Team All-American his senior season. During his college career, he played in the Orange Bowl, Cotton Bowl and All-American Bowl.

The 6-foot-2, 225-pound player was drafted by the Detroit Lions in 1963, and he stayed with them for two seasons. After the Lions, Gaubatz hooked up with the Baltimore Colts where he played with Johnny Unitas for five seasons.

Gaubatz played in Super Bowl III as the Colts and Jets faced off and Joe Willy Namath led New York to a 16-13 win.

“This is a real honor, we’ve never had anything like this before other than our letter jackets,” Gaubatz said. “You go around and see deals like this but at other places, and I am just glad it came here. I am also glad to be included in one of the first classes.”

He still has quite a memory for so many battles fought on the gridiron.

“Beating Bay City by 50 points when they were ranked that year, and we were a nobody,” Gaubatz said. “Also getting to the semifinals in my senior year and we barely made it through district finishing in a three-way tie at the end. But we beat them so we got chosen.”

One member of the 1969 state finalist football team was Johnson, who lettered in three sports at Columbia. The former Roughneck lineman was a two-year letterman in football, named all-Brazoria County, all-district, All-Greater Houston Defense, won the Marvin Gray award, team captain and second-team all state as a running back in his senior year.

After serving in the armed forces, Johnson headed to Tyler Junior College where he was named to the Little All-American Team. Colorado offered him a scholarship and he was First-Team All-Big 8 Defense in 1976. He also received the Dave Jones Award for most outstanding defensive player that same year.

The Philadelphia Eagles used their seventh-round selection to pick Johnson, where he played nose tackle and was All-Pro three years in his 12-year NFL career. Johnson played in Super Bowl 15 as the Eagles lost to Oakland, 27-10. He spent his final four seasons with Minnesota.

Davis also was a member of the 1969 state finalist team as a running back. He lettered three years in football with the 'Necks and in his final season was All-Brazoria County Offense, all-district running back, first-team all-state running back and a team captain.

In his senior year, Davis played for the South Team in the annual Texas High School Coaches All-Star game where he was voted most valuable player.

At Colorado with the Buffaloes, Davis gained 2,958 rushing yards in three seasons and still is the Buffs fourth all-time leading rusher. In 1972, he gained 342 yards against Oklahoma State, a record which to this day stands.

Davis was named the most valuable player of the Bluebonnet Bowl when they faced off against Houston in 1971. He finished in the top 20 in Heisman voting and that same year won the Balfour Award for outstanding back at the University of Colorado. He also was selected to the Academic All Big 8 and was First-Team All Big 8 as a running back in 1972.

After his senior year, Davis played in the East-West Shrine game and All-American Bowl.

Cincinnati used a second-round draft pick to select him where he played for two seasons before finishing off his career with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Smith was at Columbia High School from 1946-50. A four-sport letterman, the former Roughneck fullback played in the North-South High School All-Star Football game in his senior season.

After attending Baylor and lettering three years, Smith was drafted by the Cleveland Browns in 1955.

By the time he played for the Browns, Smith was an offensive guard and got to block for what is considered to be one of the best running backs of all time in the NFL, Jim Brown.

Smith was All-Pro four times and played in the World Championship game that eventually became known as the Super Bowl. In 1987, he was inducted into the National College Football Hall of Fame, and in 2005 into the Baylor University Sports Hall of Fame.

In September, Smith was voted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame.

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Hall of Honor Former CHS players and coaches to be recognized

Columbia High School may be a small school in a small town, but many former students have found recognition at national levels.

Four of those who have gone on to careers in professional sports, along with two of the most recognized coaches from Columbia, will be inducted Friday as the inaugural class of the "Hall of Honor for Athletics."

Coach Charlie Brand, Coach Lois Knipling Peel, and National Football League players Jim Ray Smith, Dennis Gaubatz, Charlie Davis, and Charlie Johnson will be honored.

The Hall of Honor is sponsored by the Columbia-Brazoria Athletic Booster Club, but for the past two years it has been the special project of former CHS track coach Dwight Richey.

"I've been to a lot of schools and have seen how proudly they display their tradition," he said. "I know we have a long history here, too, and our kids need to know they have that to build on."

Much of Columbia's memorabilia of former glory days has been lost. A fire on Thanksgiving Day in 1988 burned the field house down, Richey said.

"We've been trying to replace some of it over the years," he said.

Richey chose four CHS students who went on to play in the NFL for the inaugural class of the Hall of Honor because it seemed fitting since the presentation will be made at the Roughnecks game Friday night at Griggs Field.

Jim Ray Smith attended West Columbia High School from 1946-50. He was a four-sport letterman



HALL OF HONOR inductees at CHS Friday are shown, along with organizer Dwight Richey (top photo left), Lois Peel, Charlie Brand, Dennis Gaubatz; second row, Charlie Johnson, Charlie Davis, and Jim Ray Smith.

the High School All-Star Game for the winning South team. He attended Baylor University, where he was a three-year letterman in football in the Southwest Conference.

In 1955 he was selected to play in the College All-Star Game against the world champion Cleveland Browns. The All-Stars won, and Smith was drafted by the Browns. He played for them for seven seasons as starting left guard, blocking for the legendary Jim Brown and Bobby Mitchell. He then played two years with the Dallas Cowboys.

Bowls and was All-Pro four times. He played in two playoff games, including one National Championship.

He was inducted in the National College Football Hall of Fame in 1987, the Baylor University Sports Hall of Fame and the Baylor Legends in 2005, the Cleveland Brown Legends in 2005 and this year has been chosen for induction in to the Texas Sports Hall of Fame.

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Dennis Gaubatz attended West Columbia from 1955 to 1958. He was All-District and All-County in football as a junior and a senior, and was a member of the All-State team in his senior year. He participated in four sports, and also went to the state track meet in his senior year in the high jump and the mile relay.

Gaubatz played football for the LSU Tigers from 1959 to 1962. He was second-team All-Southwest Conference as a junior and second team All-American as a senior. He played in the Orange Bowl twice, the Cotton Bowl and the All-American Bowl.

He began his pro football career with the Detroit Lions for two years, and then played with the Baltimore Colts for five years. As a member of the Colts he played in Super Bowl III.

Gaubatz has been on the cover of Sports Illustrated twice, Life Magazine, and was featured in a Sports Illustrated series "Where Are They Now?"

Charlie Davis lettered in three sports at Columbia High School. He was a three-year letterman in varsity football and in his junior year was All-District. In his senior year he was All-District, All-County, All-State and the team captain in 1969 when the Roughnecks made it to the state finals. He played in the Texas High School Coaches All-Star game on the South team and was voted MVP in the game.

He played college football at the University of Colorado and was All-Big 8 Conference in 1972. He was their leading rusher for three straight years, 1971-1973 and was MVP of the Bluebonnet Bowl in 1971. He was also a national player of the week in 1971 in a game against LSU and finished in the Top 20 in Heisman Award voting. He

holds the single game rushing record at Colorado, 342 yards, against Oklahoma State in 1972 and set the sophomore season rushing record with 1,386 yards. He played in the All-American Bowl and the East-West Shrine Game.

He was also Colorado's only player in 1971 named to the Academic All-Big 8.

He was drafted by the Cincinnati Bengals in 1974, and played in 1976 for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Charlie Johnson was also a member of the Roughneck state finalist team in 1969, playing full-back and defensive line. He lettered in three sports. He was named All-District, All-County, All-Greater Houston and second team All-State as a running back. He was named the Roughneck MVP and was a Team Captain in 1969.

After graduation, Johnson went into the service, and after his return, he played at Tyler Junior College, where he was named to the Little All-American team and then played two years at the University of Colorado.

In 1976 he was an All-Big 8 first team selection, the outstanding defensive player and was named Team Captain.

He was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles in 1977, where he played five seasons and was named All-Pro defensive lineman three times and was selected to play in the Pro Bowl in 1979, 80 and 81. He played in Super Bowl 15 and received many game balls for his defensive play. He played the remainder of his career with the Minnesota Vikings.

Coach Lois Knipling Peel, known as "Coach Knip" came to Columbia in 1978 and remained until 1991. Her athletes had nine individual first place finishes at the UIL State Track

Meet, and eight relay teams had first place finishes. In 1972 her girls team won the team title at the State Meet. In 1973 and 1974 her teams finished first in Regionals and second at State.

She also had many good basketball teams, including Zone Champion in 1975-76 and Regional Finalist in 1977-78.

Coach Charlie Brand has been a part of Roughneck athletics for over 50 years, as both a player and coach.

He was a five-sport letterman while in high school. He and his doubles partner was District in tennis all four years and reached the quarter-finals at the State Meet. He was also named All-District in football in 1952.

As a coach at Columbia, Brand had five State Champions in tennis. During 29 of his years as coach, Columbia sent at least one player to the state tennis tournament each year.

He was named Brazoria County Outstanding Coach, and in 2004 CBISD named the tennis complex in his honor.

Brand also received Columbia's first Teacher of the Year award in 1987. He taught Algebra II for 46 years.

Brand was also an assistant football coach, with Columbia reaching the state finals in 1969 and the quarter-finals in 1987. In 1972 he was the defensive coach for the South team in the Texas High School Coaches All-Star Game.

A reception for the honorees will be held at the Columbia United Methodist Church, 315 S. 16th St. in West Columbia from 2 to 5 p.m. It is open to the public. The presentation at Griggs Field will be part of the pre-game festivities prior to the Columbia vs. Needville game. The presentation will start at