

Ray Sanchez: Book about football star Sal Olivias in works

By Ray Sanchez

Joe Shepard, Cathedral High's biggest booster and author of the book "Shakin' Down Irish Thunder" which came out last year, is in the process of doing another book, this one about Sal Olivias.

You remember Sal. You do if you read this column. He's one of the greatest El Paso-born quarterbacks ever to come out of this city. He played, naturally, at Cathedral High School.

But he didn't go on to play for UTEP. He played for the Miners' biggest rival, New Mexico State. Warren Woodson, the coach at New Mexico State, called him "the hardest long ball thrower I've ever coached."

IN KEEPING with my goal of remembering our past sports stars and to refresh your memory, here's some of what I wrote years ago about Olivias: "During his career with the Aggies, Olivias threw for 17 touchdown passes as a junior, 19 touchdown passes as a senior, tied a national collegiate record by completing his first 14 passes against the University of New Mexico, twice threw for five touchdown passes in a game, led the nation in total offense his senior year, was chosen All-American by at least one source and was selected to play in the annual Blue-Gray game.



Figure 1 Cathedral and NMSU football star Sal Olivias



Figure 2 Ray Sanchez

"He was a National Honor Society student at Cathedral High School where he beat out several state supported public school players to be named All-City quarterback.

"HIS BRAINS came in handy for Woodson, who often loved to use different formations in his offense, which Olivias handled with remarkable deftness.

"Charley Johnson led the New Mexico State Aggies to two Sun Bowl games and made it with the St. Louis Cardinals of the NFL. Olivias broke Johnson's school passing records during his stint with New Mexico State from 1965 to 1967."

Sal Olivias, 67, today is Internet and inventory manager at Casa Nissan in El Paso.

Shepard, who among other things puts out a newsletter for the Irish, asked me if he could use some of my writings for his new book. Go for it, Joe.

TRIVIA QUESTION: How many horses have won the Kentucky Derby twice? Answer at end.

SPEAKING OF the Irish, UTEP's president, Dr. Diana Natalicio, had to postpone her visit to the school's alumni monthly breakfast on July 13. She has rescheduled for Saturday, Aug. 3.

TOM CIABURRI, the renowned sportscaster known in sports circles as Joe Fan, wrote after reading our column on Yogi Berra: "Just thought I'd let you know. Yogi Berra has a national best selling book that sold over 300,000 copies called, 'The Yogi Book - I Really Didn't Say Everything I Said' by Workman Publishing.

"It has 120 pages of Yogi-isms in it. I used that book to explain Yogi-isms when I taught freshman English at Cathedral High back in 1994-2003."

MEMBERS OF the El Paso Baseball Hall of Fame are still in mourning over the passing of Frank Wilkin, a member of the hall's board of directors. Board president Larry Hernandez and other members provided a floral tribute at his funeral.

AND IF YOU'RE a football fan you'll be happy to read the following news item:

"The National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame (NFF) highlighted today that 12 new college football teams will take the field for the first time this season, including a record number of nine schools entering the NCAA in 2013.

"No other sport contributes more to the vibrancy of a college campus than football, and the trend of adding programs continues full force," said NFF President & CEO Steve Hatchell.

"University and college presidents clearly see the value of having programs on their campuses, and we applaud them for understanding the role football can play in the educational experience of all their students."

ANSWER TO trivia question: Gotcha! The answer is none. The race is only for 3-year-olds.

Veteran sports journalist and author Ray Sanchez welcomes suggestions for his column. Call (915) 584-0626, email rayf358@yahoo.com or visit www.raysanchezbooks.com.

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