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AISD releases inaugural class for Athletic Hall of Honor

Inductees to be recognized during Oct. 30 festivities

By Stephen Collins, Sports Editor

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The Alvin ISD Athletic Department has officially released its inaugural class for the Athletic Hall of Honor and the list includes an elite group of 12 former Yellowjacket athletes, who will be inducted during special ceremonies on Oct. 30.

Featured in the inaugural class will be Nolan Ryan (baseball), Gary Keithley (football), Jimmy Howard (track and field), the 1922 Boys' State Championship Team as a group, Alex Esquivel (football), Henry Winston (football/track), Katy Jameyson-Garza (volleyball), Bobbi Kacz (track and field), Harvey Barber and Billy Roye (tennis), Ruth Holdorff-Ryan and Rachel Adams-Thompson (tennis), Kent Waldrep (football) and **Andy Hillhouse (football)**.

A special reception for both the Hall inductees and the All-Decade Football Teams will be held at the AHS Competition Gym at 5:30 p.m., while the new Hall members will be recognized during the halftime of the Alvin-Clear Creek Football game.

The Yellowjackets All-Decade Football Teams (1950-1990) will be released in next weekend's paper. The All-Decade Team will be introduced in groups at the Alvin-Creek affair.

Nolan Ryan - With all the numbers Ryan posted during a legendary 27-year Baseball Hall of Fame career, it's almost easy to forget the "Express" initially struck fear in the hearts of hitters as a skinny 6-1, 155-pound flame thrower for Alvin High School.

Ryan won 35 games over his last two Jacket years with Alvin advancing to the State 3A Finals in 1965.

Likewise, no other pitcher in Major League history has been able to accumulate the astounding 53 records Ryan put into motion over a brilliant 27-year career with the New York Mets, California Angels, Houston Astros and Texas Rangers, which include most no hitters (7), most strikeouts for one season (383), most seasons with 300 or more strikeouts (6) and most career strikeouts (5,714).

The record setting didn't stop after Ryan's retirement in 1993. After becoming the first player to have his number retired by three teams, "Big Tex" later gained the second highest voting plurality (98.79) in the history of the Baseball Writers Association for 1999 election into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY.

All-State Quarterback Gary Keithley became "Mr. Do Everything" in the Houston press and Yellowjacket Football lore by guiding Alvin to State Class 3A Semifinals in 1968.

The Jackets amassed an impressive 12-1 record and scored a staggering 425 points while Keithley was under center. Keithley rushed for three TD's and passed for two in a 49-12 rout of Hitchcock and scored four times on the ground and threw for another TD in Alvin's 43-12 win over Lincoln.

Keithley accounted for 1,789 yards, 36 touchdowns and averaged 42.5 yards as a punter. The All-State Quarterback went on play at both the college level at the University of Texas at El Paso and in the National Football League with the St. Louis Cardinals.

The 21 touchdown passes and 1,789 yards Keithley threw for still stand as school records to this day.

Jimmy Howard earned a silver medal for the high jump at the UIL State Track and Field Championship, while going on to Texas A&M and becoming the only athlete to win the Southwest Conference High Jump crown four years in a row along with setting the American record five times and holding it for four years.



Andy Hillhouse



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Howard earned a spot on both the 1980 and 1988 U.S. Olympic Teams and was ranked among the top two high jumpers in the world in 1985 and 1986. Howard was ranked No. 1 in the U.S. in 1985, 1986 and 1987, while ranking No. 2 in the world in both '85 and '86.

Howard was inducted into the A&M Hall of Fame in 1988.

The 1922 Alvin High School Track Team became the first sport in school history to win a state championship.

Led by the crew of Aubrey Cockrell, Leslie Merchant, Joe Collins, Bobbie Owens, Bob Tinnin and Otis Coffey, Alvin defeated runner-up La Porte by a 47 points to 21 3/5 margin at regionals.

At state, Cockrell accounting for 12 of Alvin's 15 points in the B division won the 220-yard dash and placed second in both the 50-yard and 100-yard dashes to complement a fourth place in the broad jump.

Merchant picked up the other three points for Alvin by placing second in the high jump.

Alex Esquivel sparked the Jacket rushing attack in the mid 1940's and designated as the best running back in the league during the same time frame.

Esquivel accepted a scholarship to Mexico City College and was drafted by the NFL's Baltimore Colts in 1955, becoming the only player ever to be drafted into pro football from Mexico.

In 1973, Alex returned to Mexico as a featured guest in the dedication of Aztec Stadium and he was also inducted into the National College Football League's Hall of Fame during the dedication. Along with having a division in Pop Warner Football named the Alex Esquivel League, Esquivel has received numerous honors recognizing his many contributions in his home of Montebello.

Henry Winston was Alvin High School's first four-sport letterman after World War II, gaining the honors in football, basketball, baseball and track.

Winston won the mile run state title in 1949 and also claimed impressive runner-up honors in a national meet in Iowa with only a runner from Canada eclipsing the AHS senior.

Following a successful track career at Rice, Winston became the head football coach at Friendswood with the Mustangs advancing to the state championship in 1973. That Mustangs squad was later named the best 2A team of the decade by Texas Football Magazine and Winston also received runner-up accolades for Football Coach of the Year during his Friendswood tenure.

Winston's Friendswood teams also advanced to the postseason five times.

Katy Jameyson-Garza also shined in the respective player and coaching ranks. Garza became the first high school volleyball player in Texas ever to receive All-American honors as an AHS senior in 1990, before earning All-SWC Player of the Year accolades twice at the University of Texas at Austin, a National Player of the Year nominee and a spot on the USA National "B" Team.

Garza ultimately became Alvin's Head Volleyball Coach in 1997 and guided the Lady Jackets to four playoff appearances. Alvin advanced to the state semifinals during both the 1999 and 2000 seasons, going an incredible 80-8 during the two-year span.

Garza has also recently been nominated among 89 individuals for a spot on the UIL's All-Century Volleyball Team.

Harvey Barber and Billy Roye captured the first state championship for the sport of tennis at AHS by winning the state doubles' title over a team from Commerce in the finals.

Coach Fred Muston remarked about the pair following the victory that "this doesn't happen every year.

Barber and Roye claimed the 31A crown over a team from Humble and then won the regional championship at the University of Houston courts.

Fayrene Watson also advanced to state in girls' singles during the same tournament and finished with state runner-up honors after doing likewise with partner Lynda Ryan in girls' doubles the previous year.

Bobbi Kacz also entered the national record books with a blazing 10.4 seconds time in the 80-yard low hurdles in 1973. The mark still stands at the present as the best in North America.

Kacz also tied for top honors at the state meet during the same year and went on to win several events in the 100 and 400-meter hurdles, mile relay and javelin toss at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

Kacz was the inaugural recipient of the Nolan Ryan Award for best female athlete along with receiving the Miss Sportsmanship award.

During the same 1965 year, Nolan Ryan's Baseball Jackets went to state, Ryan's future wife Ruth Holdorff-Ryan teamed with Rachel Adams-Thompson to go a step further and capture the state doubles tennis championship with a 2-6, 6-2, 6-3 victory over Pharr-San Juan-Alamo in the finals.

The feat was the first ever state championship for girls' sports in Alvin High School history.

Ryan and Thompson also returned to the state as a doubles team in 1966 and Ryan went to state a third time as a singles' player in 1967.


Having served on the Alvin Community College Board of Trustees, the ACC Foundation and the Nolan Ryan Foundation, the softball field at the college was named "Ruth Ryan Field" in honor of Ryan's contributions earlier this decade. That marked the first time a husband and wife both had athletic fields named after them in the same town with Nolan Ryan Field serving as the name for the baseball field at Alvin High School.

Adams and her husband reside in Houston, where she has a practice in obstetrics and gynecology.

Kent Waldrep ranked as both the district and Brazoria County's top scorer from the running back position for Alvin in 1971.

Recruited by TCU, Waldrep served as a major part of the Frogs' running back until being paralyzed in TCU's game at Alabama in 1974.

Although his playing days were ended by the injury, Waldrep founded the Kent Waldrep National Paralysis Foundation and also helped lead the fight for the passage of historic Americans with Disabilities Act.



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Legendary Crimson Tide Coach Bear Bryant was so devastated by the incident that he established a fund to help Waldrep with his medical expenses.

Waldrep's eldest son Trey was also the first recipient of the Paul W. "Bear" Scholarship for a child of a player who competed against the Crimson Tide. The scholarship usually got to the children of Bryant's former players.

Another son of Waldrep's, Charley will become the second next fall.

Andy Hillhouse gained all-district honors at the end positions at Alvin High School in the mid 1940's and went on to earn several accolades at Texas A&M University, which included being named to the All-Southwest Conference Team (1948-50), the Walter Camp All-American Team as a two-way player (1950) and the Grantland Rice All-American Specialist Team as a pass receiver (1950).

Hillhouse was also selected to play in the East-West Shrine Game in 1950, was drafted by the NFL's New York Yankees in 1950 and played for the Vancouver B.C. Lions of the Canadian Football League in '54.

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