

Ed Derrich

Ed Derrich returns to Griggs Field tonight where he paced the sidelines for 24 years as a coach at Columbia High School to be inducted into the Roughnecks Hall of Honor. Coach Derrich served as Columbia High's head football coach and athletics director for 14 years, longer than any other head football coach in Roughnecks' history.

Ed is joined on the field tonight by his wife of 55 years, Mary Ann Derrich, who taught at West Columbia Elementary School for many years and later worked in the school district's central office. Together the Derrichs have devoted over 70 years in education with the majority of those years spent in West Columbia. Ed was a principal at several campuses in the local school district after leaving the coaching profession.

Ed Derrich came to Columbia High School in 1969 as a holdover from Jack Hays' El Campo High School coaching staff that had led the Ricebirds to a berth in the state championship game in 1967. The Roughnecks advanced all the way to the Class 3A state championship game in Jack Hays' first year as the new head football coach at Columbia High in 1969. A legendary coach in Texas high school lore by the name of Gordon Wood led his Brownwood Lions to wins in both of those state championship games against our own living legend, Jack Hays, knocking off the Ricebirds in 1967 and our beloved Roughnecks in 1969.

Coach Derrich is a 1961 graduate of El Campo High School who returned to coach at his high school alma mater the year the Ricebirds advanced to the state championship game. After graduating from The University of Houston Ed began his coaching career as the head track coach and assistant football coach at Edinburg High School in the Rio Grande Valley in 1965.

He was a defensive tackle and ran in the sprint relays for El Campo High School, then attended Wharton County Junior College before transferring to The University of Houston. Ed came to West Columbia in 1969 and assumed the duties as head boys track coach and assistant football coach.

"It was incredible the talent we had here," Coach Derrich reflects on his early years coaching track and football at Columbia High School. The highlight of his tenure as the Necks' track coach was barely missing out on a team state title in the 1970s. Ed recalls the Necks' 1,600 meter relay team was disqualified by judges when one of his sprinters allegedly stepped out of his running lane for about three steps in a race the Roughnecks had won.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Coach Derrich said. “That cost us the state track meet. I was so upset that I approached the judges and questioned their decision.” That was the year Roughnecks’ speedster Carl Williams won multiple gold medals at the state track meet. He said that Carl still holds the state record of 9.2 seconds in the 100-yard dash, a record that will most likely never be broken since meters are now used instead of yards to measure distances in races.

After handing the varsity boys track coaching duties baton off to Glynn Schmidt when Ed became athletics director, Ed would return to the state track meet in Austin for 33 consecutive years, serving as a judge at various intervals in classes 4A, 5A and 6A. He was named the successor of Jack Hays as the Roughnecks’ head football coach and athletics director in 1980 when Hays retired from coaching. Ed was on the sidelines at the Astrodome in 1974 when Jack Hays’ Roughnecks coaching staff was invited to coach the South High School All Stars.

And it was a return to the Astrodome where Coach Derrich’s undefeated 1987 football team saw its magical season come to an end in the fourth round of the postseason playoffs. Ed recalls that was such an exciting season when his Roughnecks, led by former LSU standout Wayne Williams, a fellow CHS Hall of Honor member, went 13-0 before losing to West Orange-Stark in the Dome.

“That was an incredible group of kids,” Ed says of his 1987 Roughnecks team. “They really played their hearts out.”

In Derrich’s 14 seasons as Columbia High’s head football coach, the Roughnecks won district championships in 1983, 1985, 1986 and 1987. His teams that won three consecutive district crowns had an impressive combined won-loss record of 28-8 between 1985 and 1987.

Another highlight of Ed Derrich’s coaching career in West Columbia was the joy of getting to coach his son. In addition to being an outstanding football player in high school, Paul Derrich placed second in the shot put competition at the state track meet while representing Columbia High School.

Three generations of Derrich family members have pursued coaching. Ed Derrich, who coached a total of 28 years for three different high schools, beams with pride when talking about his son Paul, currently the junior high school athletics coordinator in the Smithson Valley school district near New Braunfels, and his grandson, Zachary Whitt, who is in his fifth year of coaching. The Derrichs’ grandson is currently the offensive line coach at George Ranch High School and formerly coached at Angleton and Boling high schools.

But you can't leave the girls out. Both of Ed and Mary Ann's daughters were cheerleaders when they attended Columbia High School. Wendy Whitt, Deanna Hudgeons and Paul Derrich have given their parents six grandchildren to dote on. And the former Roughnecks head coach is extremely proud to have a great-grandson carrying on the family name: Derrich David Whitt.

Ed Derrich is currently serving as president of the board of trustees for the Matagorda Independent School District while his wife Mary Ann is president of Matagorda's Library Board.

"I had a phenomenal career," Coach Derrich says. "It was pure magic for me. It was a very difficult decision for me to get out of coaching. I loved the people in the West Columbia area, especially the kids I taught and coached. But if I had it all to do over again, I wouldn't change a thing."