

Columbia to honor its best

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By Joel Luna | 0 comments

WEST COLUMBIA — Tonight's tilt between the Columbia Roughnecks and St. Pius Panthers will be the main event at Griggs Field, but the third installment of the Columbia High School Hall of Honor at halftime also will bear watching.

Three former athletes who contributed to the growth of the athletic program — Mary Katherine Brand, Jack Patterson and Darlene Thomas Sanders — will be inducted tonight.

“Some people have done some instrumental things past high school, but we try to concentrate on what they did for Columbia High School,” Columbia-Brazoria ISD assistant superintendent Steven Galloway said. “It is a Columbia High School Hall of Honor, and we are trying to make sure those requirements are met.”

Prior to tonight's induction, the threesome will be at a meet-and-greet at 5 p.m. at Scott's Barbecue on Highway 35 in West Columbia.

Brand set the standard for Columbia athletes to follow — she was the first to win a state championship in any sport. She won her tennis singles title at the 1949 state tournament, beating the city of Mission 2-6, 6-4, 8-6.

“I am very honored and this is all right — getting an award after 60 years of not receiving anything,” Brand said. “From what I can recall it was hard and fun to win that championship. I remember being very tired after those matches.”

On the way to the '49 title she defeated San Antonio's Thomas Edison High School 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 and before that kicked off the state tourney with a 6-0, 6-1 win over Garland.

Brand also made the 1948 state tournament but did not place.

“The first time I went up to the state tournament I remember going with the attitude that I was the little girl from West Columbia,” Brand said. “One of the reasons why I enjoyed tennis was because the courts were just a block away and I started playing at a young age. I won district in my freshman and sophomore years but that was as far as we could go.”

She also played forward on a Lady 'Necks Class A basketball team that went to the state tournament two years in a row. In her senior season, she was named to the All Tournament Team. Brand also was a cheerleader for two years.

Patterson earned his accolades in four sports — football, basketball, track and field and baseball. He lettered 14 times out of a possible 16 in all four sports.

In his senior season in 1950, Patterson scored 16 touchdowns for the Roughnecks, then led both the basketball and baseball teams to district championships. He also won district titles in the high jump and pole vault.

That season he also ran a 10.1-second 100-yard dash and was part of a 440-meter relay team that ran under record state time.

“I was always that way, I had to be the best,” Patterson said. “But I worked hard at it and we were coached tough back in those days ...not too many that come along do as well in all sports.”

Patterson then played on a scholarship for the Houston Cougars, both ways — as a fullback and linebacker. In 1953, he was part of a Cougar team that beat the then-No. 3 ranked Baylor Bears, 37-7. He scored twice.

As a co-captain on the 1954 squad, Patterson helped the Cougars to a 10-7 win against Paul “Bear” Bryant and the Texas A&M Aggies.

In 1955, Patterson tried out for the Green Bay Packers and in 1958 the New York Titans, who eventually became the Jets. He returned to Brazoria County in 1958 and got involved in the industry and insurance business.

Sanders made her mark winning four gold medals at the 1972 University Interscholastic League state track and field meet in Austin. She captured gold in the 60-yard dash (7 seconds), 80-yard hurdles (10.7) and the long jump (18 feet, 3 1/2 inches) and was just shy of a national record.

Sanders also was part of the 440 relay team that won gold as she scored 35 of the Lady 'Necks' 60 total points. Columbia went on to capture the Class A team title at Memorial Stadium that year.

“I’m very excited and it has been what, 37 years ago since that happened,” Thomas Sanders said. “Boy, I was so much younger back then. I am just excited and happy to be going in.”

Now a physical education teacher at Barrow Elementary, she didn't lose a hurdles race in her final two years.

The names of all three inductees will be inscribed on a plaque, to be displayed at Columbia High School.