

# Columbia inducting 5 into Hall of Honor

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By JOEL LUNA | 0 comments

WEST COLUMBIA — Five more former greats will join the Columbia Hall of Honor on Friday in front of hundreds of supporters.

Doug Balkum, James Parkhurst, Marcus Bonner, Rhonda Bonner-Tolbert and Joe Langner will make it official in a pre-game ceremony at 5 p.m. at the Gusher room of the old West Columbia Junior High. A halftime presentation during the KIPP Sunnyside and Columbia Roughneck football contest also will take place.

## **BALKUM**

A former pitching star with the Roughnecks, he played from 1949 to '52 and helped lead them to the district championship in '51.

“I think this is great, and I am really appreciative of this,” Balkum said of the honor. “There were two pitchers at Columbia, myself and Raymond Terrell, whose grandson is on the San Francisco Giants.”

After high school he finally landed at TCU and helped lead the Horned Frogs in his junior year to the Southwest Conference crown. In his senior season, Balkum posted a 7-1 record with a .417 batting average at the plate.

He returned back home, and in 1958 took over the Roughneck baseball program, where he won the district title in his first season. In 1966, the 'Necks (25-7) advanced to the region final, losing to Brenham in the series. Balkum was 91-45-1 as the Roughnecks baseball coach when he stepped down in 1969.

“I had a great time coaching because I was a kid myself,” he said.

## **PARKHURST**

A five-sport athlete, Parkhurst participated in football, basketball, baseball, tennis and track and field.

“The camaraderie was something I really enjoyed during those days, but not only them but the community,” Parkhurst said. “We had a great group of guys and gals and during that four-year span there were some phenomenal achievements.”

He earned 13 varsity letters in those sports and was a halfback on the '57 Roughneck team that made it to the state semifinals. He placed second at the state meet in the 100-yard dash and third in the broad jump. In tennis, Parkhurst teamed up with Butch McMurrey to finish second in doubles.

At the University of Houston, Parkhurst ran the 100 and won several meets. Parkhurst resides in Newport Beach, Cali.

“You know, back in those days, we were restricted from any kind of fluids,” Parkhurst said. “In 100-plus degree temperatures four hours a day, they pushed salt tablets on us, and I am surprised not many guys had more medical issues.”

## **BONNERS**

Marcus and Rhonda are brother and sister and are going into the Hall of Honor together.

“Now that is different and surprising,” Marcus Bonner said. “But we were a family of athletes.”

Marcus Bonner was a three-year letterman at running back and a member of the 1975 district championship team. From 1979 to '81, he played at Texas A&I University in Kingsville, helping lead them to the Lone Star Conference championship in 1980.

During his time with the Javelinas, Marcus Bonner tied a conference record with his 100-yard punt return that still stands.

He also is sixth in Javelina history with nine 100-yard rushing games.

He played for the San Antonio Gunslingers in the USFL in '84 and '85 alongside Rick Neuheisel as a kick returner and running back.

After the USFL folded, Marcus Bonner was invited to the Seattle Seahawks' training camp.

“Ability-wise I should have won that spot but politics got in the way,” Marcus Bonner said. “It was great catching passes from Jim Zorn, and they treated me well, but it was just a management thing. They did call me back, but I just didn't want to go.”

As a member of the Elmoettes basketball team, Rhonda Bonner-Tolbert was a point guard and the outstanding player in 1978, helping lead the team to the region championship with a 23-9 record under Lois Knipling.

She also ran track, earning gold medals in the 440 and 880 relays at the 1975 Class 3A state meet alongside Sharion Higgins, Margo Diggs and Erlene Williams. In her senior year, Bonner-Tolbert earned her third gold medal with a long jump of 18 feet, 3.5 inches, good for gold.

After high school she played basketball at County College in Gainesville and later attended and ran track at Texas A&I.

“A lot of sports,” Rhonda Bonner said of what it was like at home. “Marcus was older, but I learned a lot from him and really I hung around them so I was always playing against the boys which made me better. I was No. 6 out of eight in our family, and we all competed in basketball, football and track and field. There were times when the girls beat the boys.”

## **LANGNER**

As a senior in 1978, Langner earned the Class 3A singles title in tennis.

“He (Doug Snyder of Austin Westlake) missed an overhead shot that could have won it,” Langner said of the final. “But I got on a roll and I just kept hearing my brother (Jerry Langner) and my cousin (David Parrack) from the stands and that just pumped me up. There were like 1,000 people there for him and about 10 for me.”

Langner had lost the previous year in the state finals.

“Nobody would practice with me because I wasn’t any good, and I also enjoyed playing baseball, but I wasn’t that good either,” Langner said. “But then I met Van Manning (2011 Hall of Honor member) and that changed everything for me. We’d practice and play from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and if it wouldn’t have been for him, I wouldn’t have stuck it out.”

He went onto play at Lamar University and still lives in West Columbia, working as a pipe designer.

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