

DAVE LEE'S LEGACY

By Harlan Woods
Mission, Texas

Somehow, it just doesn't seem right.

Dave Lee was only 39, in the prime of his life, when death called last January. Cancer was the culprit that claimed his life, that turned him from a healthy specimen to just a shell of a man in less than a year. Dave Lee was so young, so energetic, and had so much ahead of him.

I doubt if there has ever been anyone who fought so hard and so gallantly before death prevailed. Right up to the final weeks of his life, Dave proclaimed he was going to whip this thing. And, he really believed it. Even in death, Dave was a winner. He commended to more than just one person during the final trying months that he felt the Lord had a purpose with his life. He never gave up and he died with the same strength of character and positive outlook that he maintained throughout his life.

When asked if I would write a brief eulogy to Coach Lee, my first thought was that I couldn't do it. I only knew Dave for four years. We talked hundreds of times during that period as coach and writer, and I had the utmost respect for him – as a man and as a coach. But, I am not sure I knew him all that well.

I know he loved his work, he loved his players and coaches, he was a religious man, and most of all, he loved his wife, his three children, and his parents, Patrick and Shirley Lee. There were very few dry eyes when he choked up as he attempted to introduce his mother at the Touchdown Club football banquet on December 15.

It embarrassed him some that the community made such a fuss over him and conducted the numerous fund-raising activities to help pay the multitude of bills brought on by his illness. Just prior to the Christmas holidays, the Mission Lions Club was conducting a food drive to help needy families in the Mission area. Dave contacted me and said he wanted to help because so many people had done so much for him and his family. That was the type of person he was.

Most of us knew during the weeks preceding his death that Dave was fighting a losing battle. Even then, just as we did when the Eagles were down 17 points against McAllen and Memorial on successive weekends, we had hoped that some miracle would occur and Dave would come from behind to win this one – the biggest battle he ever faced.

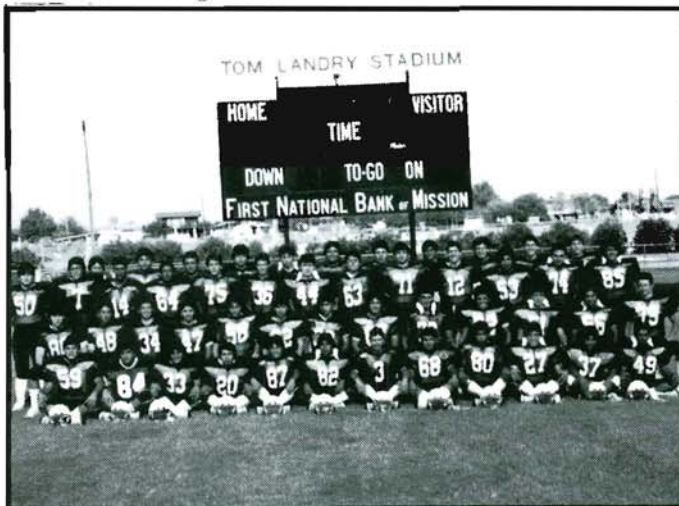
Dave Lee was a scrapper.

He looked at everything with that positive attitude that is the trademark of a winner. "If you think you're going to lose, chances are you will," he told me one time.

In his frequent talks to the service clubs and community groups, Dave never failed to arouse excitement and support for the football program. He did his homework and exuded confidence in his own ability and that of his staff. The community support was evidenced by the fact that the



Dave Lee and Staff with Tom Landry. Dave is the one with the dark glasses.



Coach Lee's First Team at Mission. His Legacy will live on.

Editor's Note: Dave Lee had me come to his school and do a BFS Clinic. I brought my daughter, Shauna, with me and we stayed in Dave's home with his family. I got to know Dave and his wife Linda. My daughter played with his daughter. I remember Dave liked to play blackjack and would go once a year to play in Nevada. After the clinic, we were laughing and having a good time as he taught me his system.

Dave Lee was an Upper Limit Coach, an Upper Limit family man and a very special person. I'm fighting back tears as I write this sentence. He will be missed. Our prayers and sympathies extend to all who were close to Dave and especially to his family. One thing is clear: Dave Lee left his mark and his positive spirit will leave a lasting legacy to all privileged to know him.



POWER CLEAN — The newly remodeled and enlarged Lee Fieldhouse at Mission High School, named after former Head Coach Dave Lee, can accommodate up to 90 athletes at one time. In the photo here, Henry Gutierrez, a Mission student, is power cleaning as Johnny Steinbeck stands behind him. Supervised sessions are held six hours a week for the Mission athletes during three school periods. (Mission Schools Photo)



CHARTING RESULTS — Mission CISD Strength Coach Jeff Dicus works out a schedule with Omar Guerra and Mark Trevino as Leo Cavazos takes a turn on the bench press in the new Lee Fieldhouse. The facility, one of the finest in the state, was dedicated in the memory of Coach Dave Lee, Mission football coach, who died of cancer on January 6. (Mission Schools Photo)

Eagles have played before packed stadiums in recent years.

There are many things I remember about Dave. The first that comes to mind is the meticulous preparation he put into everything he did. To watch the Eagles getting ready for a Friday night game and to see how hard he worked, and how much he demanded from those around him, you couldn't help but get excited and really believe that the Eagles were going to win.

I don't think I've ever been as excited about a victory as the opening game of this season when Mission defeated Harlingen, 19-6. But, following the game I had the feeling that Dave was not too surprised at the outcome and he was already looking to the second game of the season.

I guess the one thing that impressed me most, however, was his insistence that Mission football players excel in the

classroom before they could perform on the gridiron. He and his coaches held regular tutoring sessions to help those having trouble with their grades.

Dave knew the importance of passing and was not satisfied with a boy simply getting by. He wanted them to give 100 percent in the classroom, just as they did on the field.

Mission had one of the lowest rates of any school in the Valley for athletes affected by the "No Pass, No Play" rule.

Very few people realize how much he changed the football program at Mission in four brief years. He had good people in key positions and he knew he wanted to accomplish. Those who have visited the fieldhouse in recent months would never know that it was the same place Lee inherited when he came here in 1983.

When Dave first came to Mission, he made some promises. He said the Eagles would be competitive, and they have most certainly been that. He promised that the coaching staff and players would be dedicated to making the playoffs, and they did that this year, for the first time since 1968. He promised that Mission would win the district title.

It is ironic that he did not get to see the last six games when the Eagles fought their way into the playoffs. But, it gave him great satisfaction. Linda, his wife, commented that each week he would tell the doctors in Dallas to hurry it up because "I need to get back to Mission to get ready for Friday night's game."

I feel very strongly that good things are going to happen in Mission with the football program. The groundwork was placed there by Dave Lee and those who remain are dedicated to complete his task. That is not to say he won't be missed. When you have a natural leader like he was, there will be a void. But, all of Mission can take pride in the fact that we had Dave Lee for four years and his good works will continue.

You can be sure that somewhere, Dave Lee will be watching and when that time comes that the Eagles win the district title, you might hear him say, "See, I told you we could do it!"

THE DAVID LEE FIELDHOUSE

MISSION: Webster defines it as "a cooperative effort to achieve a common goal."

Teamwork is an important ingredient in accomplishing any task and never was it more evident than in a project started this past year to enlarge and remodel the athletic fieldhouse at Mission High School.

It was Coach Dave Lee's brainstorm to make the fieldhouse into one of the best in South Texas and, though he did not live to see it become a reality, he will always be associated with the program because the school district has named it the Lee Fieldhouse in his memory.

Lee Fieldhouse was completed this fall through the cooperation of First State Bank and Trust of Mission, the Mission Touchdown Club, the Athletic Department of MCISD, and the administrative staff and school board, and the district's maintenance staff.

Jeff Dicus, the strength coach for Mission athletic teams, swells with pride when he described his new facility. "I think far and away we probably have one of the best weight

room facilities in the Valley, and maybe even in South Texas. It's great to have a facility like this where our kids can come together and work out, and at the same time, build the team chemistry and family aspect that we feel is very important to our program," Dicus said.

The 40 by 80 foot addition includes 2,500 square feet of space and was added at a cost of \$12,000. According to Dicus, it can accommodate up to 90 athletes at one time, more than twice the number the old fieldhouse could handle.

The main weight room is carpeted, lined with mirrors on both walls that makes it look even bigger, and has some of the newest and most modern equipment. The old equipment was refurbished to go with new equipment ordered for the facility.

He said there are five squat racks, five incline presses, five power clean stations, four bench presses, three leg extension curl machines, two Lat pulldown machines, three calf raise machines, three sets of dumbbells, ranging from five to 65 pounds, two dumbbell racks, five station sit-up machines, one neck machine, 5,000 pounds of free weight, and 20 olympic bars.

"The overall goal of our off-season program is to offer our athletes the opportunity to be better conditioned, stronger and faster. His personal goal as a strength coach, Dicus said, is to help each athlete in striving for their true potential to be the best they can be.

"I can't say enough about our kids. They are attacking our off-season program as if there is no tomorrow," Dicus said.

He said the weight room will remain open in the summer but will be on a strictly volunteer basis. "We have some outstanding seniors who are tremendous leaders and they will coordinate the summer program," Dicus said.

In addition to the weight lifting opportunities and other features of the new Lee Fieldhouse, Coach Rusty Dowling has his own private office, First assistant Ray Wagner has an office, and the defensive and offensive coaching staffs have their own offices, as do the sophomore and freshmen coaches.

"We are very proud of it and appreciate the efforts of so many people in the community in helping us complete it. You can say it took real "teamwork," Dicus concluded.

TRIBUTE TO HUGH MASSEY

On December fourth, Hugh Massey died in an automobile accident. He was the football coach at LaMarque High School, a Texas 5-A powerhouse. On December 6, the day before Coach Massey's funeral, they advanced in the playoffs. Michael Little threw an 84 yard TD to Ronnie Johnson. "We scored for him," said Little.

In the next games, the players wore white towels on their belts, inscribed with the team logo and the coach's initials, HRM.

Coach Massey was a great Coach who worked extremely hard to help his players reach their potential. Larry Nowotny took the team over and they made it to the state finals.

Finally, running back Milton Frank summed up everyone's feelings, "Coach Massey is always on my mind."

When we were AAAA State champions in 1985, we had two Junior College scholarships. At our banquet we did not give a MVP award. We gave a scholastic award from each class and we let one player from each class give a two minute to three minute talk representing his class with a message. We are a family and no one attacks one without attacking us all.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON COACHING

The youth of America are faced with more challenges and temptations than ever before. But the rewards and opportunities are also much greater than at any other time. I believe the good old days are now! We must look for the good and learn from the bad. We can't dwell on things over which we have no control. We live in a fast paced, jet-set, short-cut world, and we sometimes take for granted our most precious resource . . . the young people of today. We coaches have a heavy responsibility and can effect our players lives for an eternity.

And, on a personal note, if you have kids of your own at home, you better take the time to talk to them before you lose them. Tell them you love them and are proud to share the same name. Make time for yourself, for your own emotional and physical well-being. And most of all, don't forget your wife. Thanks to all coaches. Good luck and God bless.

We at BFS thank Coach Dwight Thomas for being a great Upper Limit Coach and sharing his personal true life "Quest for Greatness" story. We also thank the Escambia Gator football team and coaching staff who have shown by example that hard work, total commitment and dedication can bring the dream to reality.

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