

# Newcomb's Field of Dreams

**As a football player and coach,  
retired athletic director  
cherishes memories, leaves lasting legacy**

Bill Newcomb's talents as a player and coach have stood out over the years. He's also had a knack of being associated with some football legends.

In Pasadena, he has left a local legacy of his own.

He was a standout player from 1953-56 at Pasadena High School, playing for Weldon "Stoney" Phillips. Newcomb then went on to play for Paul "Bear" Bryant at Texas A&M University and would play for longtime Baylor coach Grant Teaff at McMurry College.

Phillips, who was Newcomb's mentor, promised him that when he graduated from college, he would have a coaching position waiting for him. "It turned out to be the start of a wonderful career that dreams are made of," Newcomb said.

Now, Newcomb finds himself as one of those coaching legends as he recently retired as the district's athletic director. His involvement in the Pasadena ISD athletic programs spanned 40 years.

"He has left a legacy and has been a positive influence to so many young people," said Vickie Morgan, president of the Pasadena ISD Board of Trustees.

Like many of those legendary coaches Newcomb looked up to, such as Phillips and John "Maggie" Maguire, he now has cemented his place in Pasadena sports history. The field at Pasadena Memorial Stadium was recently named Bill Newcomb Field, in honor of the respected coach.

As a coach and as a player, Newcomb said that football symbolized his own field of dreams.

"I've been blessed," he said. "I was just a boy from Pasadena, playing the game I loved and then trying to follow the footsteps of those coaches who had a great influence on me."

## The beginning Green with Eagle Pride

After attending Kruse and South Shaver elementary schools, along with Jackson Intermediate School, Newcomb wore the green jersey of the Pasadena High Eagles. He became a dominant presence on the field, starting at fullback and linebacker for three years.

"Those were some great memories," Newcomb said. "We had some great coaches that worked your tail off. It paid off, too, because in those days you didn't play just offense or defense, you played both ways. It was a whole different ballgame back then."

The style of play wasn't the only difference. In Newcomb's high school playing career, it took almost a spotless record to advance to the playoffs. His junior year, the Eagles finished 9-1 and posted an 8-2 mark his senior year, but did not make the post-season both years. "In those days, you really did have to win it all," he said

Newcomb said the most memorable game of his high school career was Pasadena's 7-6 win over Baytown Lee. "They were tough and were one of the perennial powers," he said. "It was always a knock down, drag out affair when we played them. It was truly something to come out with a win against them."

As a 185-pound senior fullback who could provide crushing blocks to clear the way for his offense, his talents soon caught the eyes of major colleges.

## Playing for the 'Bear'

A year after Bear Bryant put Texas A&M football on the map with the historical Junction Camp workouts, Newcomb joined the Aggie squad as a freshman. He said the thoughts of playing for such a legend were appealing.

"There was a lot of excitement in the air after Junction," he said. "It was a great opportunity and at that time, I just wanted to play football. I have a lot of respect for Coach Bryant. However, everyone was scared to death of him. I tried not to think about it too much. He was a great man and a great coach. I was fortunate to have been associated with him."

Although Newcomb did not see much playing time during his sophomore and junior years, he did get in on the action during his senior year. The Aggies were ranked the top team in the nation in 1957, but Newcomb's highlight was playing in the Gator Bowl that year against Tennessee.

In the Gator Bowl, the Aggie starting fullback was knocked out on the opening kickoff and Newcomb was summoned by Bryant. "Coach Bryant said, 'Newcomb...get in there!' It took me by surprise for a moment. I ended up playing most of the first half."

The Aggies, however, came up short in the game as they lost 3-0, but Newcomb said "it was an experience I'll never forget."

The game also marked Bryant's last game as Texas A&M's head coach before taking the top job at the University of Alabama. With the coaching change, Newcomb said he didn't fit in to the new system and left A&M. He married his high school sweetheart, Bobby, got a job, and worked for several years.

At the urging from his mentor Stoney Phillips, he applied for two scholarships and set out to finish his college education at McMurry College in Abilene. He would also play for another college coaching legend in the process.

## Grant Teaff: Before Baylor Glory

Teaff, who would later become one of Baylor University's most respected coaches, gave Newcomb his chance to complete his education and some unfinished business on the football field in 1962.

"He had a strong presence, but was not overbearing," Newcomb said. "He truly cared about his players. I really admired that in him. I think that is why he went on to be so successful at Baylor."

Newcomb saw much playing time at

McMurry. As his playing career ended and graduation drew near, he called his former coach Stoney Phillips to see if there was still a coaching position waiting for him in Pasadena. "I'll have something open for you," Newcomb recalls Phillips telling him.

## Promises kept

Phillips kept his word and Newcomb was given the job as the head coach at Queens Intermediate School in 1964. At 27 years old, he guided the football team to a district championship.

"I thank Stoney so much for giving me that opportunity," Newcomb said. "He was a man of his word and a man of integrity. I will never forget him."

Others were quick to notice Newcomb's talents from the sidelines, as he became a subvarsity coach at South Houston High School in 1965 under head coach Harry Morgan.

## 'The Big Red Express'

Newcomb moved up the ladder at South Houston and became an assistant coach under head coach Ray Kleckler. South Houston's "Big Red Express" made its name known during the 1975 season with an 11-0 mark, including a playoff win against La Marque in the Astrodome. The team had also made the playoffs two years before in 1973.

"When we came home after beating La Marque, you should have seen the crowds lining the road down Edgebrook," he said. "People were going crazy. It was pure excitement and it was like a parade when we got back to the school."

Newcomb said the battle for the district title among the four Pasadena schools in the 1970s was tight.

"Every game with our schools was a true fight," he said. "If you could beat the other three (Pasadena) teams in our district back then, you had an excellent shot at making the playoffs."

Newcomb said he fondly remembers preseason match-ups with longtime rivals Baytown Lee and Galena Park.

"We've always had great games against them," he said. "They were hard-hitting and fierce contests."

Then-Baytown Lee head coach Ron Kramer was quoted in a 1975 Baytown Sun article describing South Houston as a "feisty bunch of competitors that will knock you off your feet." He continued, saying, "they are a well-coached bunch. Bill Newcomb does a great job."

The rivalry with the Pasadena schools became even more intense during the

1976-1978 seasons, when a member of the Newcomb household played on the opposing side of the ball.

## Father vs. Son

While his father was on the South Houston sidelines, David Newcomb was the starting quarterback, safety and punter for the Dobie Longhorns.

"I guess you could say it was bragging rights for the household for those two years," Bill Newcomb said. "One thing was for sure, at least one of us came out a winner."

The two split bragging rights during those two seasons. South Houston won the first meeting during David's junior year, with the younger Newcomb prevailing his senior year.

## Head Coach Wanted: A Trojan opportunity

In 1981, Newcomb was given the head coaching reins and the added responsibility as campus athletic director.

"We had some good teams and some good players," he said. "Looking back, I wish we could have been more successful in making it to the playoffs, but you can't turn back time. I look back on those years with a great sense of pride."

Many applauded Newcomb's work. In 1983, he was named the District 23-5A Coach of the Year.

Newcomb said he's proudest of the large numbers of athletes that participated in the athletic programs at South Houston.

"You must have the numbers to have a strong program and for kids to benefit," Newcomb said. "It was exciting to be a part of that."

Having a broad knowledge of how to make several athletic programs successful, Newcomb turned his sights toward a position in school administration.

## At his direction

Newcomb became the assistant athletic director in 1988 and worked under Doug Ethredge. He served in that capacity until 1995 when he was named the director of athletics.

The football, baseball and basketball programs continued to thrive during Newcomb's tenure, but he has been excited to see the success of the girls' programs over the years. "I'm proud of all of our programs, but I am very proud of the strides we've taken in girls athletics," he said. "One moment that stands out in my mind is Dobie's three softball state championships. I think that helped put Pasadena on the map in

girls athletics."

As athletic director, Newcomb was also active in the Texas Athletic Directors Association, where he served as regional president from 1999-2001. He also was a member of the Texas High School Coaches Association.

## Passing the torch... or the ball?

Dick Nance was South Houston's quarterback in 1970 when Newcomb was an assistant coach. Now, he is succeeding his former coach, friend and mentor. In the same steps as Newcomb, Nance is a former Trojan head coach and assistant athletic director.

"I've looked forward to this opportunity for a long time," Nance said. "I am very fortunate and I have learned a lot from Bill over the years. The athletic programs are in great shape, thanks to his guidance. It will be my job to keep building on what's in place."

Newcomb had words of praise for his former player and assistant athletic director.

"Dickie has always been a leader," Newcomb said. "You could tell that by the way he led on the field as a quarterback and on the sidelines during his coaching career. He approaches his job in athletic administration the same way. It's very nice to see that such a great individual and friend will be leading the athletic program."

"This job is a service," he added. "You must be a people person and always make sure the kids come first. Dickie Nance exemplifies those qualities."

## The links and the lake

Newcomb said he's looking forward to retirement and spending time with his wife and family at their new house on Elkins Lake near Huntsville. He said he'll also be spending a good portion of his time on the golf course.

According to Newcomb, he considers his family his largest support group. He's been married to his wife Bobby for 48 years and cherishes his son David and daughters Deandra and Dena, as well as his grandchildren. "I've been blessed with such a great family," he said. "I'm looking forward to spending more time than ever with them."

However, he'll never forget his walk through history as a player and coach.

"I have made some lifelong friendships and have many moments that I will cherish forever," Newcomb said. "It was a fun ride every step of the way. I am fortunate I was able to live out my dream." ●



**Bill Newcomb,  
retired Pasadena ISD Athletic Director**