

## Tribute to Wilson David Matthews

1921 - 2002



Wilson D. Matthews

Legendary high school football coach and long-time University of Arkansas assistant football coach and administrator Wilson Matthews died late Sunday night, May 12, 2002 at the age of 80.

A member of the athletic department since 1958, Matthews was instrumental in the growth of UA athletic programs as a coach, an administrator and a goodwill ambassador for the Razorbacks.

"Wilson was the one who taught me how to be a true Arkansawyer," Arkansas athletic director Frank Broyles said. "He was invaluable to me in decision making regarding the Razorback program and its fans. I never made a decision regarding the future of our program without asking Wilson for his input. He was instrumental in helping elevate fan support around the state from a healthy enthusiasm to an unbridled passion for the Razorbacks.

"He had a unique relationship with his players that bonded them both to him and the school for a lifetime. His players loved and respected him immensely. His passing is a tremendous loss for our state, the University and the entire Razorback family."

Matthews took on administrative duties in 1973 after a successful football coaching career. He served as an assistant and then associate athletic director until 1992 when he assumed the title of associate athletic director emeritus.

Matthews assisted Broyles with departmental administration for more than four decades including working with the academic-athletic scholarship program and Razorback Clubs all over the state. His plan of ticket prioritizing was responsible for the athletic department's fiscal independence and has become a cornerstone for success in all Razorback sports.

His outstanding accomplishments didn't go unnoticed. He was enshrined in the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame and was inducted into the Razorback Hall of Honor, the Arkansas Tech Hall of Distinction and the Arkansas High School Coaches Hall of Fame.

The 3,800-square foot Wilson Matthews "A" Club, located on the east side of Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium, was named in his honor. Matthews was also

recognized last fall as one of the "difference makers" in Razorback athletics. A monument in his honor was established in the Razorback Honors Plaza in front of the Broyles Center.

He received perhaps his greatest national honor when he was named a Distinguished American by the Arkansas Chapter of the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame.

Matthews joined the Razorbacks in January 1958 after building an incredible record at Little Rock Central High School. He coached the defensive ends and linebackers at Arkansas before taking administrative duties in 1969. He continued to coach the freshmen until being named assistant athletic director in 1973. As a varsity coach, Matthews coached two All-Americans and eight All-Southwest Conference players. During his tenure the Hogs appeared in eight bowl games.

He had possibly one of the finest success stories in all of Arkansas prep history. At Little Rock Central, his teams won 10 state championships in 11 years and posted a remarkable record of 109-17-3, losing only three games to in-state teams.

Rogers (Ark.) High School was where Matthews began his coaching career in 1944. He led his squad to a 7-3 finish before moving to Central as an assistant. His first Tiger teams went 12-0-1 in 1947 and 9-1-1 in 1948.

His next two teams finished 10-1 and 10-2. In 1951, his team was 9-3 but a one-point loss to North Little Rock that season was the last defeat a Matthews-coached Central team had against competition from Arkansas. The Tigers were undefeated in the state the next six years.

Matthews led the Tigers to unbeaten seasons in 1956 and 1957, and left the school with a 33-game winning streak. His 1957 team was ranked No.1 nationally.

A native of Atkins, Ark., Matthews played football at Atkins High, Arkansas Tech, Arkansas and with the Monticello Marine-Navy team. He earned his bachelor's degree and his master's in education from Arkansas. Matthews also served his country in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II.

He is survived by three sons and two daughters in law, David and Anna Matthews of Hershey, Pa., Scott Matthews of Rogers, Ark. and Bruce and Linda Matthews of Springdale, Ark., and four grandchildren, Matthew, Drew, Mark and Leah. He was born in Atkins, the son of the late Omer and Ester Matthews. He was preceded in death by his wife Martha Lou Matthews.