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Longtime Roosevelt coach dies

'Crusty' on football field, Harney had 'warm, caring side'

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Seattle's high school football coaches were once neighborhood icons, and now one of the final members of those fall legends is gone.

On Tuesday, former Roosevelt coach Don Harney died at his north Seattle home. He was 84. He had a distinctive style.

With his shaved head and low growl, he resembled a general, but actually was a bombardier-navigator in World War II, flying 31 missions over Europe.

At Roosevelt, Harney coached the Roughriders from 1963 to '71, winning three Metro League championships and turning out a long line of talented players. Foremost were fullback Bo Cornell, defensive linemen Dave Worgan and Mark Hannah, and offensive linemen Steve Schulte and Jim Andrienas, all eventual starters at the University of Washington, and fullback Jack Root, who played for Stanford.

"In my mind, he was a great example of a crusty, tough disciplinarian who also had a real warm, caring side that came through when you were around him for a length of time," said Tony Allison, a tight end/linebacker on one of Harney's final teams and now a teacher.

"Harney was a guy who was kind of old school and gruff," said Worgan, an Alaska Airlines pilot. "His bark was more than his bite. I had respect for him."

Harney was an all-city center for Cleveland High School in 1938 and a member of a league championship team the season before. He played at Central Washington, and after the war graduated from Washington State.

In '47, Harney was hired at Roosevelt and stayed for 34 years. He was the Roughriders head baseball coach for 15 seasons, winning a city championship in '59. He also coached boys soccer and girls softball. Football, however, was what made him the most visible.

After dutifully spending 16 seasons as an assistant coach, Harney replaced Lou Hull and won championships and went unbeaten in his first two seasons in 1963 and '64, winning 17 games and tying one. The latter group of Roughriders was considered the mythical

state champion, which was then decided by The Associated Press poll. He earned another title in '66.

Harney walked four miles every day, starting at 5:30 a.m., after retiring in 1981. He told how he frequently found money, even reciting the amounts -- \$43 in 2003, \$64 in '02 and \$146 in '01. He took dog bones to ward off aggressive canines. He even found an elderly woman lying in the street one morning, gave her CPR and carried her piggyback to her home.

He looked tough, but Harney had a genuine soft side. Though he was a proud veteran, he once wrote a letter of support for a former player seeking conscientious objector status during the Vietnam War.

Services are pending.

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