

Doc Hayes: Almost a Legend
By Bob St. John
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It was 1917, and the leaping, sputtering automobile was sweeping the country and a slick shooter named William S. Hart was riding across silent screens in a thriller called "The Narrow Trail."

Now prosperity was already being felt but, also, it was a time of awakening, perhaps reckoning when people began to realize that World War I was not a glamorous adventure and that Johnny would not always come marching home.

Next to the war, talk on Capitol Hill was of a looming prohibition. And a young man named Ernest Hemingway from the Midwest was in Italy driving an ambulance on the Austrian front an episode in his life he would later put into the words of "A Farewell to Arms."

The big thing in Krum, Texas (which mind you, had two automobiles of its very own) was the Rest Hour Theatre on Saturday afternoon. The tranquility, however, came to an abrupt halt when a teacher named Jason Sanders moved into town. Now Sanders seemed like a nice feller, all right, but then he got a blacksmith to make a thin iron circle and a carpenter to make a funny looking thing that seemed like half a door. Sanders plopped the contraption up a long pole, and started trying to get the interest of a bunch of gaping, grinning country boys. He would teach them, he explained to play a game called basketball ...or something like that. One was a lanky youngster whose pants lacked about a foot reaching his feet and who had a big watermelon grin and usually kept the other kids laughing by telling funny stories.

THE KID'S NAME was Elmore Onslow Hayes, who was 11 at the time, and he has seldom been away from what he calls "That crazy, mixed-up game of basket" since. Well, except when the Ladies Aid Society of Krum tried to ban the sport because the participants were playing in pants actually cut above their knees and, of all things, shocking sleeveless shirts.

Elmore Onslow? A classic like Uriah Heep..Timothy Christopher. But when the buzzer sounded to end the 1966-67 season at SMU Elmore Onslow completed one of the most noted, admired, colorful and successful coaching careers in the country and did so as simply, Doc Hayes.

"I got my nickname in Krum," Hayes has explained. "My father was a doctor there and one day a fellow picked me up and put me on the soda fountain and said, "Little Doc? You want a soda?" I've been Doc ever since. Anyway with a name like Elmore Onslow you simply have to do something."

Doc Hayes has gone through nine years as a player at Krum and Denton Normal (now North Texas), 40 years of coaching at Pilot Point, Dallas Crozier Tech and SMU... and a head of hair, which he quickly passes off. "God made all heads, we know for a fact," Doc always tells anyone who asks. "Well he just covered up the ones he was ashamed of."

Doc takes a lot of ribbing about his bare dome, but nobody jokes about his success. He retired after having won eight Southwest conference titles, an all-time record, and this becomes even more impressive when you consider all eight have come in the last 13 years and that during that same span, his teams have finished third only twice.

"Yep, coaching is the crazy, mixed-up world I've lived in for 40 years." Noted Doc. "My doctor assures me that (at 61) my health is still good, but I think in order to keep it, I'd better retire now."

"I look back and keep remembering something somebody said once, He said that you don't have to be crazy to coach basketball but being crazy certainly doesn't interfere with coaching it, I subscribe to that.

"But it has been my life...it's excitement, emotion, frenzy, anxiety, success, failure ...drama...it's all been a part of me and I wouldn't change that."

Few coaches have ever been more wrapped up in their vocation than Doc Hayes. His antics on the bench have been overshadowed only by his success. They were never planned, but spontaneous. Some of the reactions and facial expressions were classics, and people would actually try and get seats near the SMU bench just to watch Doc should the game be dull. And Doc always laughed along with the fans, though some of the so-called antics were only surface interpretations of the torment which was going on inside.

“I was never proud of my reputation of being colorful on the bench,” said Doc, “but I don’t think I’m much different than most coaches. Watch any of them, or the fans, or cheerleaders or maybe even a few sports writers I know.

“Why you’ve never seen so many gyrations in your life. Basketball does this to you. A man can’t be calm in basketball. No way. You’re so close to the action and it all happens so fast. You react. It’s against a person’s nature to keep calm.

“I’ve tried...I tried sincerely the last few years to slow down.”

Slowing Down the past few years Doc has only done things like leap from his seat and send his sports jacket soaring toward the ceiling, fall off his chair on the seat of his pants and spin like a top, fall to his knees and raise his hands and face to the ceiling like an anguished faith healer and fall down and pound the floor...you know, just things like you do when you slow down.

The sportcoat flight was perhaps the most famous “reaction” in Doc’s career. It happened a few years ago as Doc leaped from his chair to “violently disagree with an official” and launched his coat toward the ceiling...all in one motion. It climbed ...10,15,20 feet and then unfurled and floated down like a parachute. People around SMU tried to duplicate that one for years, nobody ever could.



Doc Hayes



Rest Hour Theater

