



CLASS OF 2022 INDUCTEE



DANNY VILLANUEVA

Daniel "Danny" Dario Villanueva

Daniel was born to migrant missionary workers in Tucumcari, New Mexico. He was the ninth of twelve children. His life was a "rag to riches" story.

Danny was one of the NFL's first Latino kickers and a pioneer of Spanish-language television. Danny played in 110 games over eight seasons in the NFL. He co-founded Univision network and become one of the wealthiest Latino executives in the country.

Danny played football for New Mexico A&M, now as New Mexico State in 1958 and 1959. He was part of the teams that won back-to-back Sun Bowl games and well as going undefeated in his senior year.

The Los Angeles would visit Las Cruces to evaluate Danny's teammate, Pervis Atkins and saw him kicking. Pervis, 2009 NMSHOF inductee, who was drafted by the Rams. Danny would sign with the Rams and do both punting and placekicking, which is rare in the NFL. Nicknamed "El Kickador," whenever he walked onto the field, they would play bullfighting music.

He earned \$5500 for the year kicking for the Rams. To boost his income, he worked as a sportscaster at KMEX, a small Spanish station.

1962, he led the NFL in punting and set a team record by kicking a 51-yard field goal.

In 1965, Danny was traded to the Dallas Cowboys for Tommy McDonald and his pay increased to \$15,000. Tommy, a Highland High School graduate, was later inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame and a 1980 Albuquerque Sports Hall of Fame inductee. Danny last game ended up being the championship game against the Green Bay Packers in the famous Ice Bowl at Lambeau Field in 1967.

After two years with the Cowboys, where he set the record for the most extra points kicks made without a miss (56), he retired and became the new director of KMEX in Los Angeles.

The station became the springboard of his eventual media empire. Danny bought stakes in other TVC stations and KMEX became the flagship of the Spanish International Communication Corp, which eventually became Univision network in 1988.

