



Jim Ottmann

Sometimes, a man's life can be summed up in one sentence. If so, here's Jim Ottmann's take on Jim Ottmann: "When I get somewhere," he says with a lighthearted laugh, "I stay."

Ottmann remained long enough at Sandia High School to win 143 football games, one state football championship and influence thousands of Matador players and students with his combination of high volume, huge passion and big heart.

His time on the Albuquerque sports scene reads like an athletic to-do list. Ottmann coached football, wrestling and golf at Sandia. He became a notable wrestling official on both the high school and collegiate levels, and officiated the NCAA tournament for several years. And when that wasn't enough, he could be seen at the scorer's table at Matadors basketball games, running the clock or keeping the book. Still does, in fact.

His passion for sports was so great that years after retiring from Sandia, where he had a 143-102-3 record in 23 years as head coach, he returned to the field as an official. "Since I can remember athletics was my life," Ottmann says. "It's all I've ever done."

Ottmann came to Albuquerque as a football player. He arrived at the University of New Mexico, recruited by the staff of Marv Levy. Only problem was, Levy had left months before practice was to begin. The staff of the new head coach, Bill Weeks, agreed to honor Ottmann's scholarship, but nobody knew anything about the junior college transfer from Austin, Texas.

They found out soon enough: Ottmann became a key member of the last Lobo team to win a postseason game, the 1961 Aviation Bowl. Upon graduation in 1963, he took an assistant coaching job at Sandia.

By the 1970s, Ottmann was at the helm. His Matador teams were physical and tough, always relying on ball control and defense. His most notable team, the state championship outfit of 1976, had two of the best Albuquerque players ever to compete: running backs Phil Trent and Mike Carter. One went to Nebraska. The other was a Parade Magazine All-American and played at URM.

Those memories are sweet ones, but Ottmann says he had other years, just as enjoyable, with teams that didn't win it all. It was the games he loved most. "I look back, and I enjoyed everything about it," says Ottmann. "I liked working with the kids. Win or lose. I was a guy who liked to win and work hard."