

## ★ VINCE CAPPELLI ★

A baseball aficionado of monumental proportions, Vince Cappelli is experiencing the happiest of times in the sport he loves.

He says that joining the Albuquerque Sports Hall of Fame elite tonight as its 52nd inductee is a thrill of a lifetime.

Yet Cappelli, 72, retired former University of New Mexico and University of Albuquerque baseball coach, says the sport may never be the same again because of the major league baseball strike.

"I'm deeply honored," Cappelli said of this election to the Hall of Fame.

"It was a surprise. The Hall has so many great sports personalities in all sports. This is by far the biggest honor in my 55 years of baseball."

Cappelli was named to the University of New Mexico Hall of Honor in 1993.

Other Lobo coaches in the Sports Hall of Fame are Roy W. Johnson (all sports) in 1974, Hugh Hackett (track) in 1981, Bob King (basketball) in 1982, Dick McGuire (golf) in 1986 and Rusty Mitchell (gymnastics) in 1991. Top Lobo administrators in the Hall include Pete McDavid, L.F. "Tow" Diehm and John Dolzadelli.

Cappelli, a 1950 UNM graduate, was captain of the Lobo baseball team in 1948 and 1949. He succeeded Bob Leigh as Lobo coach in 1975.

His 14 teams (382-334-7) posted the winningest baseball record of any Lobo coach. He was named Western Athletic Conference coach of the year in 1985 when the Lobos (42-17) were nationally ranked. He retired in 1989.

Cappelli, who has been a major league scout the past four seasons, is concerned about the game he loves.

"There's a sadness in baseball because of the strike," he said. "The national pastime could be losing its team identity of years past."

"Fans will be the big losers. The top players just won't be around with one team long enough to form hometown attachments. The players will go where the big money is."

He said he couldn't honestly pick the best team he ever coached.

"My 1985 Lobo team, led by Jim Fregosi Jr., was sensational," he said. "But my 1968 University of Albuquerque team had an Olympian, Vic Ambrose. With him, we beat such nationally-ranked teams as Arizona, Arizona State and Michigan in addition to Oregon and Oregon State."

His UofA Dons had a 114-45 record from 1965 to 1969.

Other teams he coached were Valley High School (223-86) from 1954 to 1966 and Albuquerque Indian School (43-10) during 1952-53.

A native of New York City, Cappelli played for the New York Athletic Club and for Hudson Valley, N.Y. from 1938 to 1941 before enrolling at UNM in 1942. He didn't play baseball for the Lobos because freshmen were not eligible.

He served with the Merchant Marine during World War II, then returned to Albuquerque. He graduated from UNM in 1950 and received his master's degree at New York University a year later.

While coaching at UNM, Cappelli was invited as a special instructor by baseball federations to teach in Germany, Israel and Mexico.

He also served as a first base coach for the Albuquerque Dukes in 1975 and 1976. And, Cappelli was part of the Kansas City Royals' player development program from 1969 to 1973, serving as a general manager at Sarasota, Fla., and Kingsport, Tenn.

Cappelli has served as southwest scout for the Royals, the Dodgers, the New York Yankees, the New York Mets and the Cleveland Indians.