



JIM MARSHALL

written by Ken Sickenger

James "Jim" Marshall always considered himself a secondary player during his long career as an athlete and a coach. The numbers suggest otherwise.

Yes, Jim played alongside the likes of NFL stars Gale Sayers and John Hadl. And yes, some of the successful teams he coached included All-Conference and All-American players. But Jim inevitably rose to leadership roles and his teams enjoyed remarkable runs of success.

A Venice Beach, California native, Jim attended high school in Missouri, served in the Navy for four years and then enrolled at Kansas University, where he lettered in both football and baseball for three years. After spending two years coaching at Liberty High School in Missouri, Jim found his calling in New Mexico.

He spent 38 years coaching baseball at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas and College of the Southwest in Hobbs. His teams won 619 games and Jim led NMHU to three appearances in the NAIA semifinals. His Cowboys teams rode to one third-place finish, a runner-up finish, and a national championship in 1967.

Jim enjoyed reflecting on his coaching days at Highlands, but he didn't accept much credit for his program's success, including its 1967 championship run.

"That team had talent," Jim told the Albuquerque Journal in a 2020 interview. "You could have coached that team and won a national title. What I think about more is our two other teams that got to the semifinals. Those teams were good enough to win, too, but we ended up falling short."

Jim, who passed away in 2021 at the age of 86, might easily have earned induction into the New Mexico Sports Hall of Fame based

only on his career at New Mexico Highlands. In addition to his 384 victories as a baseball coach, he served as a professor, coached softball, was offensive coordinator for NMHU's football team for several seasons and spent 12 years as athletic director.

But Jim's NMSHOF induction in 2024 was not limited to his 26-year tenure at Highlands. He went on to spend 12 years at College of the Southwest, winning 235 more games as a baseball coach and leading the school to its first regional appearance. Jim also served two years as athletic director and was the driving force behind renovating CSW's baseball facilities.

Jim had high expectations for his students, players and co-workers over the years and was known for a no-nonsense approach. But those who got to know him came away with respect.

"My dad was a hard man but he loved all his players," Jim's son, Jim Bob Marshall, said. "It was a tough love, and his former players are all doing well in the community thanks to that tough love."

Jim did not seek the limelight, a habit developed partly during his time at Kansas. As a linebacker/running back, Jim had occasional carries and receptions helping the Jayhawks to a win in the 1961 Blue Bonnet Bowl. Then future NFL Hall of Famer Sayers arrived.

"After that I got to carry the ball on picture day," Marshall told the Albuquerque Journal. "When I played on offense, it was to block for Gale Sayers."

Still, Jim Bob Marshall believes his father would take pride in joining the New Mexico Sports Hall of Fame.

"It was all about the players to him," Jim Bob said, "but, yes, he would be happy."