

Dewey Bohling's life was a testament to the power of sports as a vehicle for community building and youth development. Known affectionately as "The Vagabond Coach," his remarkable career spanned six decades, leaving a permanent legacy across New Mexico, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

A New Mexico Legend

Bohling's journey began in Athens, Ohio, but his athletic prowess blossomed at **Highland High School** in Albuquerque. A multi-sport star, he broke the state record in the discus in 1955 with a throw of 179 feet, 9.75 inches—a mark that remained the New Mexico high school record for nearly five decades. He was an **All-State fullback** who led his team to its first Class AA State Football Championship, earning him national recognition and multiple scholarship offers.

He continued his success at **Hardin-Simmons University**, where he played under his high school coach, Sammy Baugh, a Pro Football Hall of Famer. Bohling was drafted by the **Pittsburgh Steelers** in 1959 and later played for the **New York Titans** (now the Jets) of the newly formed American Football League.

The Vagabond Coach

After his professional career, Bohling returned to his passion: coaching. Over 43 years, he coached at **10 different schools** across New Mexico, including starting the first football and track programs at schools like **Navajo Pine and Questa**. He compiled an impressive record of **150 football wins**, four district titles, and eight district track titles, and coached 15 state champions.

Beyond the numbers, Bohling was a mentor and a pillar of the community. He was deeply committed to serving young people, especially in Native and rural communities. He directed summer youth recreation programs and worked to build bridges between school systems and local traditions. As longtime Albuquerque Academy Football Coach Kevin Carroll stated, "Dewey's teams were well-prepared, played hard and clean, and always demonstrated good sportsmanship—a trait they learned from Coach Bohling."

An Enduring Legacy

Bohling's commitment to the sport never waned. Even after retirement, he continued to volunteer as an assistant coach at several high schools, mentoring young athletes and coaches without compensation. His lifelong dedication earned him induction into the **Hardin-Simmons University Hall of Fame** and the **New Mexico Track and Cross-Country Coaches Hall of**

Fame. He was also named one of **Sports Illustrated's 50 Greatest New Mexico Sports Figures.**

Dewey Bohling's story is one of unwavering service and a profound belief in the power of sports to shape character and community. His legacy lives on through the generations of athletes he inspired, coached, and guided.