


Dobbs left El Pasoans with happy memories

Bobby Dobbs, who died at his home in Altus, Okla., Wednesday, burst onto the El Paso scene like an atom bomb in 1965.

The Texas Western Miners had posted a dismal 6-8-2 record in 1964. In their opener the next year, with Dobbs in his first year as coach, the Miners went out and blasted North Texas State 61-15.

I was stunned beyond words. So were other El Pasoans.

It was no fluke. A new era had been launched. The Miners finished with an 8-3 record that year. Then they were 6-4 and 7-2. Along the way they beat Texas Christian and Mississippi in the Sun Bowl.



Ray Sanchez

Talk about good times. Talk about happy days.

The record sort of fell off after that and Dobbs finished his 8-year career at the Miner helm with a 41-35-2 mark.

Some say Dobbs was lucky, that he inherited some great players. Linebacker Freddie Carr and receiver Bob Wallace, who turned out to be

All-Pro material, were recruited by Don Haskins as basketball players. And quarterback Billy Stevens, who threw for 300 yards while playing only the first three quarters in that 1965 opener, had been recruited by Warren Harper, who had preceded Dobbs. Several other stars-to-be had been recruited by Harper, too.

Still, Dobbs was the man who put all the talent together and turned it into a successful machine. And there was no questioning his keen mind. In fact, some people claim he was ahead of his time, that he caught everyone by surprise with his pro-style passing attack.

His defensive genius was obscured


somewhat by the offense, but it was noticed by other coaches. After the Miners beat Mississippi, 14-7, in the Sun Bowl after the '67 season, Mississippi coach Johnny Vaught remarked: "I'd heard all about the Miners' offense, but no one told me about their defense."

Dobbs learned his football from two of the greatest brains in the sport — Red Blaik and Vince Lombardi.

Dobbs played fullback at Army. His successor at that spot, by the way, was Doc Blanchard.

Blaik was head coach at the time.

Later, both Dobbs and Lombardi became



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Bobby Dobbs



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Blaik's assistant coaches.

Dobbs' connection with Lombardi proved fruitful in another way. Dobbs sent quite a few of his players to Lombardi's Packers after their college careers. Among them were Carr, Stevens, defensive back Leon Harden, tight end Ron Jones and defensive tackle Thurman Randall.

Dobbs players who went on to National Football League careers with other teams included Wallace at Chicago, defensive back Charlie West at Minnesota (he later played for Detroit and Denver), wide receiver Chuck Hughes who was drafted by Philadelphia but wound up at Detroit, defensive back Gene Epps at Washington, offensive guard George Daney at Kansas City.

At one point, Dobbs ranked second among college coaches in number of players in the NFL.

Dobbs, whose brother Glenn coached at Tulsa for many years, was considered somewhat aloof. But Eddie Mullens,

who was sports information director of the Miners then (and is again today), says Dobbs was always ready to help others with counseling. Mullens says Dobbs was responsible for West, who had been drafted by the Cincinnati Reds, going to the NFL. It was a wise move, for West played many years in the NFL and gained many honors.

Dobbs' quiet manner may have been a result of his West Point training. He stood 6-foot-2 and straight as an arrow. Billy Stevens once said of him, "There are captains and there are enlisted men. With Dobbs, you know you are the enlisted man."

Dobbs' death Wednesday was not unexpected. He had suffered for years with Alzheimer's Disease. He didn't even recognize relatives the past few years.

His last days were sad, but the memories he leaves behind are joyous.

Ray Sanchez is sports editor of the Herald-Post.