

Charles 'Butch' Ferriter Coach, principal 'all bark ... no bite'
By Pryor Jordan (Contact)

LITTLE ROCK - Charles "Butch" Ferriter towered over the players he coached and, with an ominous 6-foot-4-inch frame, almost everybody else, as well.

Ferriter, a heehawing coach, and later, high school principal, who was hired on at Pulaski Academy in the early 1970s to form its athletic program, died in Little Rock on Thursday of pancreatic cancer.

He was 68.

On Saturday, friends, former players and fellow coaches recalled Ferriter as a tough disciplinarian who loomed over basketball courts and football fields, usually sporting a mouthful of chewing tobacco.

But those who played for Ferriter quickly learned not to fear the longtime high school coach, said his friend, Mike McGibbony. "He was all bark and no bite ... he just had love in his heart for kids."

After some of his former players learned of his terminal illness last month, they created a Website www.butchisms.com , so visitors could post tributes and farewells to their coach.

"I'm proud to say that I played on your teams, learned how to drive with you, learned the finer art of bowling, volleyball, softball" and just messing around, Ferriter's former player, Greg Lane, wrote on the Web site.

Like many of his former athletes, Ferriter, whose father left home when he was young, grew up under the guidance of coaches who became father figures to him. Like a child idolizing his father's profession, he knew from an early age that he was going to coach, friends said.

"Coaching was in his blood," said John Robinson, Ferriter's high school classmate and fellow coach. "He knew what he wanted to do from day one."

Ferriter, who graduated from Little Rock Central HighSchool in 1957, was gregarious even as a youngster. His ability to be on the giving and receiving end of a joke made him popular among his classmates, his friends said.

"He loved to tell stories and laugh," McGibbony said. "He came from a relatively modest-income family and I used to tease him, saying that the only reason he was in athletics is so he would have a place to shower."

Robinson said that Ferriter was popular among his fellow students. "Not only because he was a basketball player and football player, but because he was just one of those good guys."

After graduating from the University of Arkansas at Monticello, where he played basketball, Ferriter began coaching basketball at McGehee High School. He then became the head basketball coach and assistant football coach at Texarkana, before leaving coaching briefly for the insurance business.

"I think he wanted to get into something that may have been a little more lucrative," said his wife, Jauan Ferriter. "But his heart was not in it, and he just couldn't stand not being involved with kids in some way."

Ferriter's first wife, Connie Quimby, died of cancer in the mid-1980s.

After leaving Pulaski Academy, Ferriter coached at Jacksonville High School and became a school administrator at Sylvan Hills High School, retiring as principal from there in 2000.

He briefly left retirement in 2005 to become the principal at Cutter Morning Star High School in Hot Springs and retired again recently.

"He could go anywhere and do anything, no matter how elegant or how rough," Jauan Ferriter said. "He had been to the White House and loved to go to the Town Pump, the little beer joint on Rebsamen Park Road."

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