

By Jim Kleinpeter

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There aren't many former LSU athletes in the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame that the late Martin J. "Marty" Broussard hasn't inspected from head to toe.

Soon, after induction ceremonies June 27 in Natchitoches, the man who didn't have a medical degree but was affectionately known as "Doc," will sit amongst them.

Broussard's 60-plus years of association with LSU as head athletic trainer has earned him a place in the Hall.

Perhaps no other person in the history of the school's athletic program was more beloved by athletes or touched more lives than Broussard, a former two-sport Tiger athlete himself, who took the job as head athletic trainer in 1948 and still had an office on campus in 2001.

And those that knew him best would say no one loved LSU more deeply or passionately. A few months after being voted in as the first athletic trainer to be enshrined in the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, he was inducted into the LSU Sports Hall of Fame.

"We're very proud," Broussard's son, Martin "Buddy" Broussard Jr., said. "I can assure you with all of the accolades he received in his life, if he were alive today, he'd say these two honors overshadow anything else he's done.

"He dedicated his whole adult life to LSU."

Broussard was an icon at LSU. After becoming head trainer he ruled with an iron hand but had a knack for relating to young athletes to the point that he was always the first person they sought out when returning to visit LSU after graduating.

"Marty was a great one," said another LSU icon, Billy Cannon. "He was a friend to the friendless and a mother to us all. If you just listened to his words, you'd think he hated all of us. But he was a no-nonsense guy with a tremendous heart.

"If you went down, you didn't want to see the doctors, you wanted to see him. He was always there and would give you advice whether you wanted it or not. He was always there with an ear."

Unable to attend medical school because of financial restraints, he ran his training room like a doctor's office and even wore a white lab coat. One student trainer admits to scrubbing the baseboards on his hands and knees. Broussard expected players and student workers to dress appropriately before entering.

Players were required to shower before receiving treatment and Broussard played no favorites, despite handling an all star cast of future pros such as Cannon, Bob Petit, Jimmy Taylor, Pete Maravich and Shaquille O'Neal.

Cannon remembers getting his comeuppance from Broussard shortly after arriving at LSU. He showed up in the training room and said he wanted his ankles wrapped rather than taped.

“He stormed into the training room and said ‘As long as you are an athlete here, you’re going to have your ankles taped,’ ” Cannon recalled. “To make his point he taped my ankles without letting me shave them, and it was really painful taking it off. You can believe I showed up the next day with my ankles shaved to the calf.”

But there was a lot more to the man than his tyrannical ways. He acted as a doctor, psychologist and surrogate father, dispensing advice to athletes that went beyond the playing field and into their personal lives.

And the players appreciated it.

“The athletes thought he knew more than the doctors – and he probably did,” former LSU athlete and athletic director Joe Dean said.

Broussard often took the athlete’s their side against coaches wishes. Mel Didier said Broussard probably saved his baseball career by standing up to then-LSU football coach Bernie Moore. Didier, a two-sport star, injured his right shoulder in football against Mississippi State in 1945. With Tennessee up the next week, the coaches wanted Didier to take a painkilling shot to enable him to play.

“Marty said ‘You’re not going to do that; he’s got a future in baseball,’ ” said Didier, who has been affiliated with Major League Baseball for 58 years. “He was just a young trainer at the time. Without him I would have taken that shot and played.”

Buddy Broussard said players showed up in droves on the occasions when his father was hospitalized. One particular instance moves him to tears.

“In the early 1980’s one former athlete who had become a successful cattle farmer in west Texas drove 800-1,000 miles to see him,” Broussard said. “He stayed for two hours and when he got up to leave, he kissed dad on the forehead and told me ‘If it wasn’t for your dad, I would have achieved nothing in this world.’”

Broussard’s influence extended well beyond LSU. He was highly-respected and highly-involved among his peers nationally and internationally and an innovator.

He was co-developer of the Drury-Broussard Torque Table to test muscular strength, co-author of booklets on functional isometric contraction for football and functional isometric contraction for golf and author of the booklet Athletic Training Guide. He developed the Quicckick energy drink, which predated Gatorade.

Broussard served on training staffs for the 1955 Pan American games and the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome, and in 1963 named Trainer of the Year by the Rockne Foundation. He was one of five founding members of the National Athletic Trainers Association Hall of Fame, to which he was elected in 1978. Likewise, he help found the Southeastern Conference Trainers Association.

Broussard grew up loving LSU in Abbeville. He earned a baseball scholarship to LSU in 1939 but his college career was interrupted by World War II, where he served two years as an Army medic.

As a senior in 1944, he was the high scorer at the SEC track meet with 15 points, competing in the long jump and the 220-yard dash. He was simultaneously a student trainer and athlete, taping ankles before heading out to baseball practice or track workouts.

After graduating from LSU in 1944, Broussard worked as a trainer at Texas A&M and Florida before returning to LSU for good in 1948. He went on to earn a masters degree in biochemistry and a doctorate in education. He taught anatomy and kinesiology for 33 years.

When Broussard moved across the street to the Pete Maravich Assembly Center down the hall from basketball coach Dale Brown's office, the two became fast friends.

Broussard went into semi-retirement in 1993, but maintained an office at LSU until 2001. As a tribute to his legacy, Dean made him a special assistant to keep him coming to the place he loved, and friends chipped in to pay him a salary.

"As soon as you say the name Marty Broussard, three things pop up," Brown said. "Brutally honest, a fiercely loyal friend and a passion and love for LSU that is almost unmatched. There are so many stories you could write a book longer than War and Peace."

And, now, there's one more way to readily identify Marty Broussard - Hall of Famer.