



Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial



TOMMY CHESBRO

October 28, 1939 - September 1, 2006

Stillwater High School Class of 1957

12th Annual Memorial Induction Ceremony

September 29, 2007

In his athletic prowess, his exceptional loyalty, and his generosity of spirit, Tommy Edward Chesbro exemplified Stillwater High School Pioneer spirit.

Born October 28, 1939, in Colorado City, Texas, to Ladora and Ray Chesbro, Tommy's family moved to Stillwater when he was in the sixth grade. His father had played guard at Oklahoma A&M, and Tommy, too, excelled as an athlete. Weighing only 145 pounds, he still managed to

letter in football in both his junior and senior years at Stillwater High School, a feat that led his coach, Nate Watson, to comment that Tommy was "probably the biggest 145 pound end in the State".

Yet, football was actually Tommy's second sport: He won the state wrestling championship at 130 pounds and went on to wrestle on two national championship teams at Oklahoma State University. While attending OSU, Tommy married his high school sweetheart, Shirley Rae Wright and in 1959, he earned a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education. Following graduation, the Chesbro family, which now included a son, Tommy Ray, moved to Blackwell, where Tommy taught history and coached wrestling. Five years later, they returned to Stillwater with a second son, Doug. Tommy led the SHS wrestling squad to its first state championship in 1969, the same year their third son, Todd was born.

In 1970, at the age of 29, Tommy was named OSU Wrestling Coach, only the fourth man to hold that position. The following year, his team won the NCAA wrestling championship. His teams placed among the top four nationally a dozen more times, and he was named National Wrestling Coach of the Year in 1971 and again in 1984.

In his 15 years as OSU's coach, Tommy earned a national reputation as a matchless technician, whose teams won 227 dual meets with only 26 defeats, a 90 percent winning record. During those years, he coached 20 individual NCAA champions and 20 National AAU and USA Wrestling winners. In 1995, he was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

His greatest legacy, however, lies in the quality of the relationships he forged with the many men and women who counted him both personal friend and athletic icon, with the countless young people who attended the wrestling camps he led in Stillwater and across the country, the scores of high school wrestlers that he mentored, and the teams of young men he coached at OSU.

Tommy opened his heart, his home, and frequently his pocketbook to young people, with whom he was always willing to share life's greatest pleasures: hunting, fishing, and outdoor cooking, spiced liberally with a mischievous sense of humor. His late father-in-law, Ray Wright, summed up the life of this exceptionally big-hearted man when he said of him, "He's the best man with kids I ever saw".

Upon Tommy's death September 1, 2006, at the age of 66, the current OSU Wrestling Coach, John Smith, expressed the feelings of many, when he said of him, "He was always there for me".

Presenter
Dennis Crowe,
Former Stillwater High School Head Wrestling Coach