By MARY FOSTER AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - For the first time since 1941, Eddie Robinson could sleep late without worrying about his players missing class, reviewing film or recruiting.

The man who won 408 games at Grambling State - more victories than any other coach in college football history - and built a nationally known program at a tiny school tucked away in the piney hills of north Louisiana, has retired.

It's hard for me to believe it's over," Robinson said. "I guess I'll get used to it eventually, but it'll take a while.'

It will take a while for everyone to get used to Robinson not being on the sidelines.

On Nov. 28, he retired amid tributes and tears after spending, as he puts it, "57 years with the same wife and same job.

Robinson was saluted by the famous - President Clinton called - and the ordinary - fans chanted his name and wept along when the 78-year-old coach broke down in sobs.

You can't imagine the impact Coach Rob had," said Roosevelt Taylor, one of many former players on hand for Robinson's last game. "He was the ultimate role

Taylor, who played in the NFL for 14 years, was one of 210 players Robinson sent to the pros. They include four NFL Hall of Famers and a former Super Bowl quarterback.

Robinson finished with a record of 408-165-15 in 55 seasons. His teams won all or part of Southwestern Athletic Conference titles and eight black college national championships.

When Robinson began at Grambling, civil rights was but a dream and opportunity was lim-



ited for even the most gifted black athletes.

Opportunities have grown tremendously since I played,' said James Harris, a Grambling quarterback in the late 1960s and now an executive with the Baltimore Ravens. When I played, I could not have gone to other schools in the state. Now, black athletes are at every school in the country.

Robinson's final three seasons were all losing ones. Grambling lost its fifth straight Bayou Classic on Saturday, 30-7 to Southern University, and finished the year 3-8.

Eddie never has to apologize for anything," said former player and Hall of Famer Willie Davis. 'His record speaks for itself.'

was great, but it was not his only contribution.

"He took a program that nobody even heard about and made it internationally known," said former Grambling sports information director Collie Nicholson. "He created a pro-gram that had greater implications for black America than football. He demonstrated that opportunities exist for those who understand the process and learn how to make it work."

As important as winning was to Robinson, it was never his only goal. He never lost sight of

Grambling's main mission.

He arrived at the athletic dorm every morning at 6 a.m., ringing a bell and forcing sleepy players to get ready for class.

Even if they went on to professional careers, former players remember how Robinson nagged those without degrees. And those who never played another down after college also benefited from their time on the team.

"He never stopped preaching education," said Virgil Robinson, president and chief executive

"I remember we had 28 seniors on the 1970 team that went 9-2. Of the 28, 21 graduated and among the 21, you wound up

It may sound corny, but Coach made sure you left school realizing football could be used as a lesson in life."

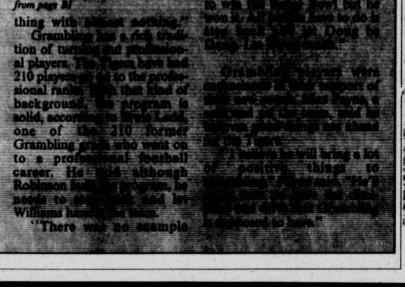


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Teddy Petree scored 25 points to lead the Reynolds junior varsity to a victory in their season-opener. The Demons improved to -O with two victories last week.

Demons freshmen get win in season-opener

By SAM DAVIS

THE CHRONICLE Sports Editor

Coach Chris Pinnix had no idea what to expect when the Reynolds ninth graders opened their season last Wednesday night at Herman Bryson Gym. Pinnix, in his first season at the

helm, had no experience as the Demons' head coach and obviously none of his kids had played on the high school level.

Reynolds' pressure defense helped solve the team's nerves. Reynolds opened the game with an 18-6 first-quarter run to take control of the game and held on for a 58-31 victory over North Surry

The Demons stretched their lead to 26-6 midway through the second quarter before North Surry got on the scoreboard in the period.

Reynolds' defense caused the Greyhounds all kinds of problems early in the game. North Surry solved it temporarily in the latter stages of the second quarter and at the start of the third quarter, but had problems after that.

Pinnix said the key to the game was his team's quick start.

"I thought the guys really started strong," he said. "We started the game in a full-court pressure defense and they had trouble adjusting to it. The press gave them fits and by the time they solved it, we had a big lead.'

After falling behind 26-6 with 3:29 to play in the first quarter, North Surry rallied behind the play of Chris Umstead to close the gap to 26-10 at the half. North Surry continued to fight

from behind at the start of the third quarter. The Greyhounds cut the lead to six, 28-22 with 3:24 to play in the quarter, but Reynolds went on a 15-2 run to take a 43-24 lead at the end of the period.

Again, Pinnix said pressure defense gave his team a boost.

We changed up our defense a little," he said. "I think we caught them off guard again.

"I have to give them credit," Pinnix added. "They made a nice run at us and cut the lead down. But we came back at them again and that allowed us to get the

Overall, Pinnix said his team did relatively well.

For a first game we weren't bad," Pinnix said. "Our defense

had a lot of breakdowns. "I'm proud of the effort they gave us. I'm just glad to get the win. It was good for us to go against someone different. After all the practices, it was good to see

someone in different color jerseys. "I thought one key for us was the fact that we were focused. After school we went to study hall and then pre-game meal. The kids handled all of that well. They weren't too emotional, they played with a level head.'



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