

Richardson to speak at KM Hall of Fame

Former New York Yankee second baseman Bobby Richardson will be guest speaker at the ninth annual Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame ceremony



BOBBY RICHARDSON

Pride Ratteree, and the Second Baptist Church men's softball team which claimed numerous championships on the local and state scene from 1973-83.

This year's Special Achievement Award will go to KMHS junior tennis/track star Jackie Houston. Houston has won three straight North Carolina High School singles titles in tennis, and also won the 400-meter run in last spring's state track meet.

Richardson was a member of the Yankee Dynasty which dominated the major leagues in the fifties and early sixties. He played with such Yankee legends as Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Roger Maris and Whitey Ford, and played under legendary manager Casey Stengel.

Richardson played high school baseball in Sumter, SC for Fred Withers in 1952 and '53, and helped the Sumter American Legion team win the state championship. He signed with the Yankees right out of high school at the age of 17, spent two years in the minor leagues and was called up to the Yankees in the spring of 1955.

Nine of his first 10 years in the majors, the Yankees won the American League pennant. The only year they were ousted in the regular season was in 1959 when the Chicago White Sox took the A.L. flag.

The Yankees won their last A.L. pennant during that stretch in 1964 under Yogi Berra. Richardson stayed on until 1966 when he retired at the age of 31.

"I really wasn't old enough to retire," Richardson said, "but I just got tired of the travel involved and I wanted to spend more time with my family."

During his 12-year stretch with the Yankees, Richardson compiled a lifetime batting average of .270, and he hit over .300 twice. He was a seven-time all-star, was MVP of the World Series in 1960 and runner-up to teammate Mickey Mantle for the A.L. Most Valuable Player Award in 1962. To date Richardson is the only member of a losing team to be named the World Series MVP.

Richardson set World Series records for most runs batted in (12 in 1960), most RBIs in a single game (6 in 1960), and most hits (13 in 1964). Richardson played in 30 consecutive World Series games and won five consecutive Rawlings Gold Glove Awards.

Richardson, who just turned 60 and still lives in his hometown of Sumter with his wife, Betsy, is now retired. He said he loves to travel, spoil his 12 grandchildren, and speak at gatherings such as the Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame.

A Baptist, Richardson is also well-known as a lay speaker. Two of his sons, Robbie and Ron, are ordained Baptist ministers.

Richardson said his biggest thrill in baseball was watching Mickey Mantle hit prodigious home runs from both sides of the plate, and watching Roger Maris break Babe Ruth's single season home run record with 61 in 1961.

"And then - and I don't say this the wrong way - but I've had both of their funerals," he said. "They were great players and great friends of mine, and this just points out that time is moving along."

After retiring from the Yankees, Richardson spent several years coaching on the collegiate level. He took over the baseball program at the University of South Carolina in 1970, rebuilt it into a national power, and in 1975 led the Gamecocks to a second place finish in the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska. The Gamecocks compiled a 51-6 record.

"We lost to Texas in the final game of the College World Series," he recalled. "That was a most enjoyable experience."

During a seven-year tenure at South Carolina, Richardson became friends with Kings Mountain native and USC assistant football coach Pride Ratteree who was Paul Dietzel's defensive coordinator for a number of years.

Richardson served as athletic director at Coastal Carolina for a number of years, and later served as head baseball coach at athletic director at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. He retired five years ago.

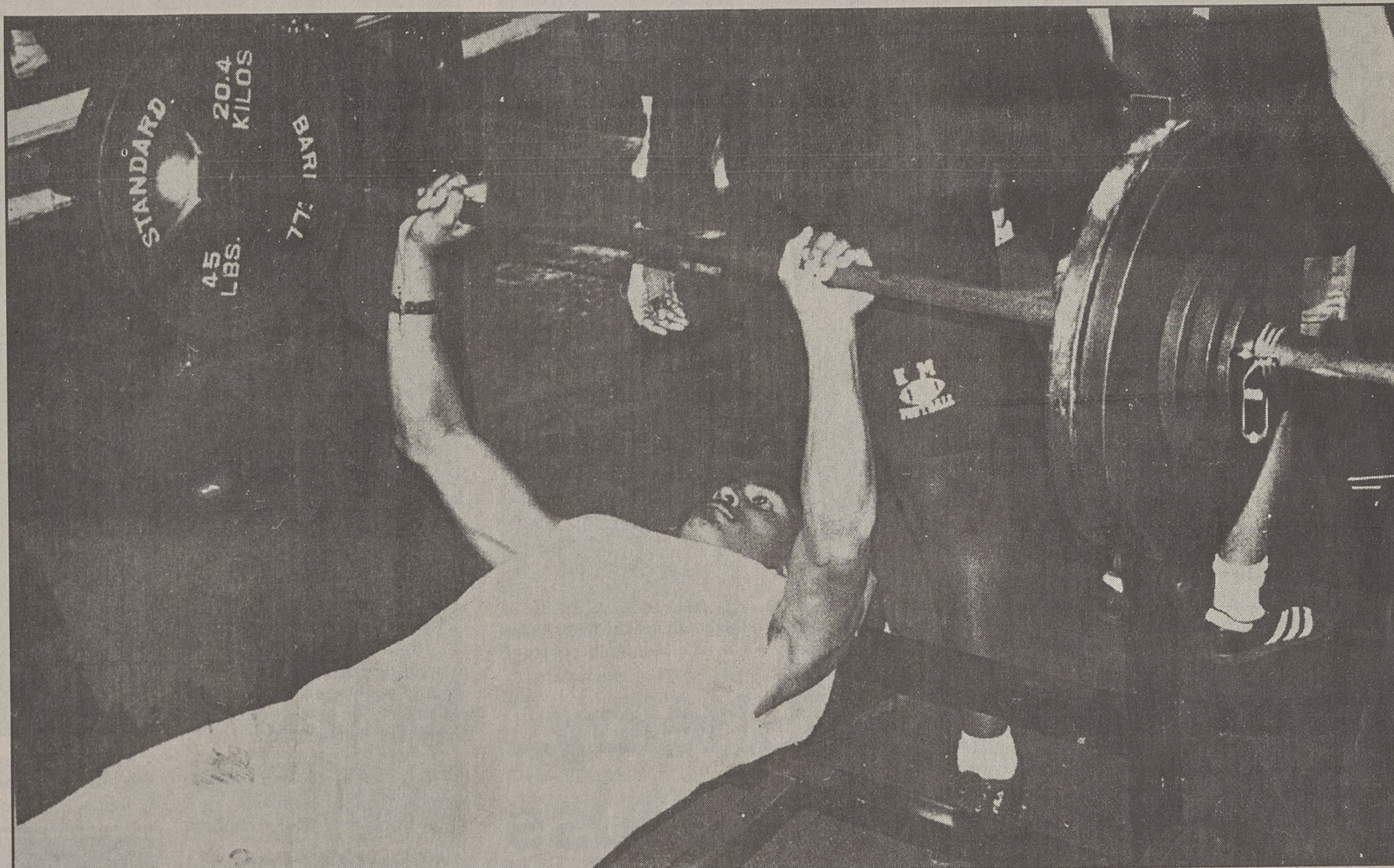
Richardson is still active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and served for ten years as president of Baseball Chapel. He has received many honors over the years including two honorary doctorates, the Order of the Palmetto from his home state of South Carolina, and the prestigious Golden Gavel Award from Toastmasters International.

Richardson will pull double-duty at the Hall of Fame ceremony here. In addition to being the featured speaker, he will also induct his high school coach, Withers, into the Hall.

He called that a great honor.

"It's really funny," Richardson recalled, "because I went out for the baseball team the year before Coach Withers came to Sumter, and I was cut. Fred was good enough to let me make the team."

■ Tickets for the Hall of Fame banquet and induction ceremony will go on sale soon at various locations in Kings Mountain and from members of the Hall of Fame committee. Tickets are \$10 each and include both the 6:30 meal in the KMHS cafeteria, and the 7:30 induction ceremony in B.N. Barnes Auditorium.



Corey Jones builds upper body strength in KMHS weight lifting class.

Weight lifting helps improve strength, confidence, team unity

Most sports fans judge a team on what it does on the field, and that's not likely to change.

But few fans - especially in the high school ranks - don't fully realize how much hard work athletes perform to be prepared to play.

Today, preparing for a Friday night ball game is much more than a week's worth of practice and a pep talk from the coach. Indeed, most high school sports have become a year-round activity.

Although the past football season has long been history and the next is months away, 65 KMHS gridders as well as other athletes who participate in basketball, baseball, soccer and other sports are involved in a weight program which Athletic Director Ron Massey hopes not only will improve their strength and stamina but will also make them more confident and bring about greater team unity.

KMHS athletes go through a nine-week cycle where they lift weights and at the end of the period compile totals in four major lifts - the bench press, squat, hang clings and incline bench. They also do dips, vertical jump rope and test their times in the 40-yard dash. KMHS has weight lifting classes for boys and girls.

Massey has designed three different clubs, or specific goals, that each athlete can achieve and they all take pride in accomplishing those feats and seeing the results of their hard work. When they meet the requirements for club membership, they are rewarded with T-shirts.

To become a member of the Hard Rock Club, one must have a 200-pound bench press, 250-pound squat and 135-pound power cling.

To become a member of the Iron Mountaineer Club, one must bench press 250 pounds, squat 300, and have a 165-pound power cling.

To become a member of the prestigious Ultimate Barbarian Club, one must have a 300-pound bench press, 400-pound squat and 225-pound power cling.

At present, only one football player, J.W. Garner, has become a member of the Ultimate Barbarian Club but Massey said several other athletes are very close to joining the Charter Member. They have achieved one or two of the requirements but are short of becoming a full-fledged member. He expects they will be in the club by the end of the year.

Massey records each student's results in the various lifts and posts them on a huge board in the John Gamble Stadium field house. Athletes are proud when their totals are erased and replaced with higher figures.

Massey, who brought the club ideas with him from Seventy-First High School in Fayetteville where he was a successful football coach on the 4-A level, said the clubs help create enthusiasm for the strength program.

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Editor

about a strength program is how much it cuts down on injuries," he said. "An athlete can get a lot quicker and more flexible, and the chances of becoming injured are a lot less."

Kings Mountain athletes go through a cycle where they lift four days a week for four weeks, then go to three days of lifting and two days of extended flexibility, plyometric training and agility drills.

In addition to becoming stronger and cutting down on injuries, Massey said a big asset of a well-rounded weight program is that it builds confidence.

"You can see their confidence level improve when they see themselves get a lot stronger," he said. "Mommies have to buy bigger shirts. The athletes enjoy flexing in front of the mirror, and that helps them improve their self-confidence a little bit."

Although he has been in Kings Mountain less than a year, Massey said he has seen tremendous improvement in the strength of the athletes.

"I told the kids after we finished our nine-week cycle last week that it was one of the best nine-week cycles I have ever had a team go through," he said. "We incorporated a couple of lifts they hadn't been doing. It took a little while for them to see their improvement there, with hang clings especially. We just finished breaking down the entire averages for each class, and we've see so much of a change that our sophomore averages came out to about what our senior classes would have been last year. The overall team strength for us next year is going to be a lot better."

Massey was scheduled to take some of his athletes to Northwestern High in Rock Hill this week for a weight lifting meet, and later they will compete in another meet at West Caldwell. That's another opportunity that is new to KMHS athletes.

"I've done it in the past - at Raleigh and Fayetteville," he said. "I try to do it about twice a year. I take kids that have really done well to some competition. The kids really enjoy it because it's something a little different for them. It's a good experience to get some competition against some other people."

The athletes also recently competed in their own lift-a-thon to raise funds for the KMHS athletic department.

Massey said one of the most gratifying aspects of a good weight lifting program is that it builds unity among athletes.

"Kids are pulling for each other," he said. "They're pushing each other. When you work hard for something it means a little bit more to you than when you don't."

That kind of unity also pays off on the field, and that keeps the fans happy.

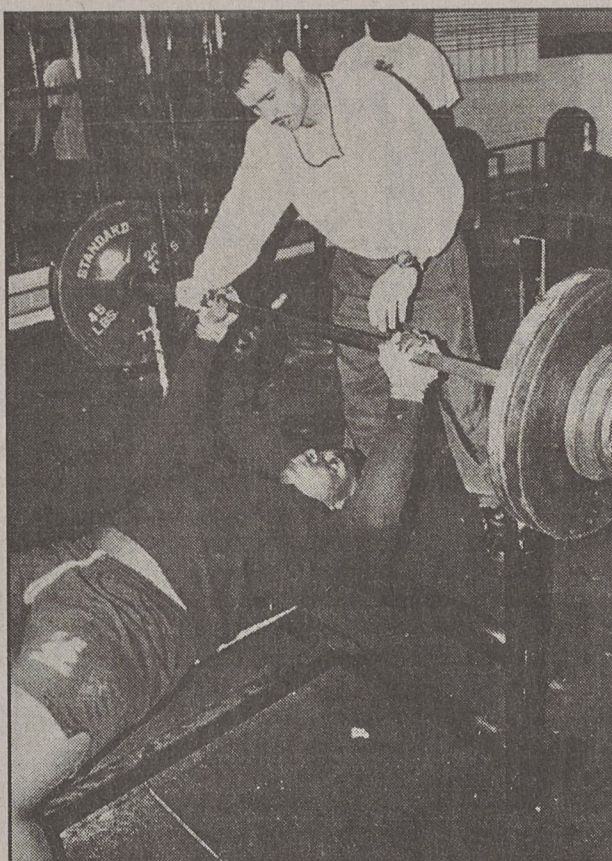


Coach Ron Massey encourages Joey Patrick to lift 300 pounds, and the big Mountaineer lineman did it.

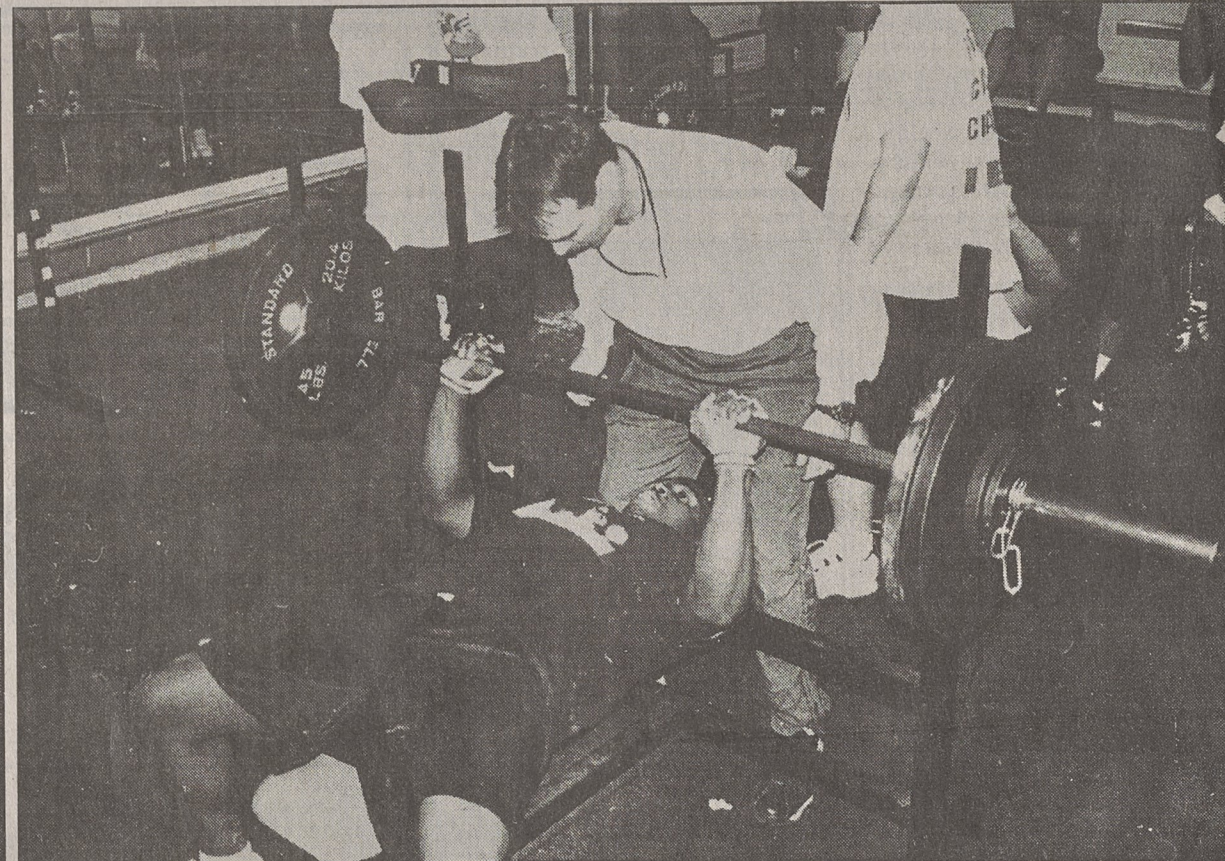
"They get excited about how much they can improve as an athlete," he said.

But a successful weight lifting program is much more than adding strength, says the veteran coach.

"I think what a lot of people miss when they talk



Coach Ron Massey works with football player Emory Brown in KMHS weight lifting class.



Lance McClain gets encouragement from Coach Ron Massey as he successfully meets one of his goals in weight lifting class at KMHS.