

Evening honors those from world of athletics, aids children

Barbara Aston-Wash
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Chad Pennington can bring out a crowd!

More than 1,300 sports enthusiasts gathered at the Knoxville Convention Center to hear the New York Jets quarterback speak at the 26th annual Greater Knoxville Sports Hall of Fame dinner and induction ceremonies, which brought 10 new members into the hall.

Since its inception, the event that benefits the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley has raised \$1.5 million, with \$170,000 raised in this year's salute. More than 6,000 youths are served by the 17 Boys & Girls Clubs facilities in this area.

Hall of Fame Inductees for 2007, introduced by "Voice of the Vols" Bob Kesling and presented recognition plaques by the hall's board chairman, Roy Kramer, were golfer Barbara Bordinger, basketball coaches Dick Campbell and Don DeVoe, footballers Anthony Hancock and Fuad Reveiz, official Phil Hatcher, hockey's Don Labelle, baseball's Jimmy O'Brien and Neal Ridley, and tennis player Chris Woodruff.

Chad and Lady Vols softball pitching star Monica Abbott were 2007 Special Awardees. Monica was on the diamond elsewhere and could not be here for the induction. Also honored were coach Pat Summitt and the Lady Vols basketball team in recognition of their national championship.

Jenae Anderson of Austin-East High School and Angela Puleo of William Blount High were honored as Female High School Athletes of the Year, while future Vols Anthony Anderson of Austin-East, Tyler Maples of Maryville High and Dennis Rogan of Fulton received Male High School Athletes of the Year awards.

Sitting at a table front and center that evening was a proud group of Chad's fans, including his mother and dad, Denise and Elwood Pennington; his sister, Andrea; and his grandmother Kathleen Martin of Clinton. Onstage with Chad and the other inductees and their mates was Chad's wife, Robin, whom he met in a classroom in West Virginia while a student at Marshall University.

Reared in Powell, Chad graduated from Webb School, where he was an outstanding quarterback. Then, in his senior year at Marshall, he led the Thundering Herd to a 13-0 season and was an excellent student; he was Rhodes Scholarship finalist.

Friends say Chad and Robin are a well-grounded couple, bringing up their two sons, Cole, 3, and Luke, 1, in a Christian home while working philanthropic efforts into their busy schedules. They have created the 1st and 10 Foundation to fund initiatives for bettering communities in Tennessee, West Virginia and the New York metropolitan area through activities such as Share Our Soles, which provides sneakers and backpacks for children; the Bobby Hampton Race for a Cure, which has raised more than \$10,000 for fighting cancer and for related charities; and the annual Celebrity Bowl, which raised more than \$160,000 for the foundation in the past year.

"Chad was always a good boy, never in trouble" says his grandmother. "He used to fish a lot with his grandfather and me during summers spent with us at our lake house in LaFollette. He still comes to the lake but now fishes with his dad. Those two are very close."

As a high-school coach for 30 years, Elwood Pennington is said to have been a fair but tough disciplinarian and a good motivator.

While Chad majored in journalism at Marshall and is an accomplished student of football who communicates well from the podium, the idea of being involved in sports broadcasting has been dampened, he says, by some of the journalists he has dealt with in New York.

“I feel I can make the most impact coaching in high school,” he said. “You can do a lot to influence young lives there, and it is the most exciting level in football.”

Robin will tell you Chad is a mischievous tease, and her account on how they met differs considerably from his. “Mine is the correct one,” she assures, smiling while she holds the Jets golf bag presented to him for being the keynote speaker; Chad is busy signing autographs and having his photo taken with fans.

Chad told the crowd he loves coming back to East Tennessee and the mountains. Asked about getting the Jets to the Super Bowl this coming season, he said he hopes things will play out for him as they did for last year’s speaker, Peyton Manning.

A father/son trio attending the event in support of inductee Hatcher were Charlie Brentz and his twin sons, Bryce and Jared, recent graduates of South-Doyle. Bryce was just drafted by baseball’s Cleveland Indians, but current plans are to attend Middle Tennessee State. Jared, who was a South-Doyle wrestler, plans to attend Pellissippi State and then Florida, where he’ll study prosthetics.

Campbell Daggett, a student at Sequoyah Elementary, was enjoying a night out with his dad, Kevin. The 7-year-old plays soccer, baseball and basketball.

At the pre-dinner reception were Buck Vaughn, a founder of the Hall of Fame, and his wife, Linda.

Among the former inductees catching up on old times and talking with Chad were football stars Andy Kozar and Herky Payne, accompanied by their wives, and basketballer Hank Bertelkamp.

Margie Ison, retired weather reporter for WATE, Channel 6, found several longtime admirers who were happy to see her at the reception.

Among the hundreds attending were Tim Burchett, David Biggerstaff and son Josh, Max McCoig, the Rev. Mike Sluda, Jeff Ginsburg of Oak Ridge and Jacque Ayers, Ted and Diane Wilkes of Clinton, Pat and Dot McGothin, Patrick McGlothlin, Mary Costa, Jimmy and Melanie Hyams, Don and Vandy Leak, Gail and Mike Pettit, Meg and Sammy Manning, Jennine and David Biggers, Tim Irwin, Dan Boring, Nathan Hart, Bill Arant, Alice Lunceford, Amy Zubkes, Brent Ball, Lisa Warren, David Mulrooney, Teresa Scott, Jim Clayton, Kevin Griffin, Ashley Thomas, Sally and John Fisher, Bob Black, and Buck Coatney.

On his television show “Marshal Andy” Smalls strums a guitar and sings the kind of music cowboys sang around the campfire, but it was love songs and the love of his life — wife Kathryn — that took first place on a recent Thursday evening at Maple Grove Inn, the beautiful antebellum home on Westland Drive.

The golden occasion marked the 50th anniversary of their marriage June 29, 1957, in Charleston, S.C., which was Kathryn’s home.

The couple has a son, Drew, who attended his parents’ celebration with Rebecca Walton of Birmingham.

Hosts were Rick and Missy Bowen. Pianist Margaret Seagraves provided music through the evening.

Among guests were Jack and Bobbie Carpenter, Harold and Lynn Ward, Reed and Suzanne Lindsay, Lloyd and Amy Richardson, Bill and Louise Stokes, Jan Hogan, David and Kathleen Ackerberg, Kris and Karen Shinlever, Paul and Terry Alexander, Jack and Doris Sharp, Carroll and Jolene Shanks, Lloyd and Evelyn Davis, and John Jones.

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