

Everyone knew Beau

Legendary football official passes away

By Chad Cooper & Kevin King
Examiner staff

Not only are football referees in Southeast Texas saddened by Beau Hicks' death, but football officials from all over the state are mourning the news. H.T. "Beau" Hicks Jr. passed away on Sunday, Aug. 24, at the age of 83.

He was a staple in the Texas Association of Sports Officials (TASO) and was the District 4 Director at the time of his death. From fellow officials, coaches and even fans, everyone knew Beau.

Just last week, board members of TASO, including Bud Alexander, Bill Fecci and Tommy Moore, visited the officiating legend at Harbor Hospice and honored him with the TASO Lifetime Achievement Award.

Beau began officiating high school football in 1957 and worked his way up the ranks and it wasn't long before he was on the field refereeing games in the Southwest Conference and into the Big XII era — from officiating the Texas-Texas A&M rivalry on Thanksgiving night to working bowl games such as the Cotton Bowl and Aloha Bowl in Hawaii.

After retiring from the college ranks, Hicks continued to officiate high school football

and became a scout for the NFL as well as college football.

"He was very dedicated to football," said Mike Defee, a former high school official in Southeast Texas and now a referee in the Big XII Conference. "He was passionate about the game. A really good football official ... honesty, integrity, and courage are without question, and he stood for all of those things."

Beau was a mentor to hundreds of officials, and every Monday night during football season, he could be found sitting up front at the weekly Southeast Texas Football Chapter of Officials meeting.

"I came into the chapter a young man, and Beau was one of those guys if you poured your heart and soul into officiating, he would do anything he could to help you," Defee said. "He watched me grow ... and helped me every step of the way. He always stressed the importance of getting better and challenging yourself."

He said, "One thing you learn in life, there is no such thing as staying in the same place. If you are staying in the same place and not doing anything to improve, those people that are coming up and working hard

are going to overtake you."

Up until her death in February, his late wife Nelda accompanied Beau to every game he officiated.

"Nelda lived and breathed football officiating also," said Judge Bob Wortham, who officiated high school football for many years and was the head linesman on Beau's crew for many years, allowing the two to become close friends. "Nelda was right there with him. At many times she was the second most important person in that chapter. She was the secretary of the Beaumont chapter for many years."

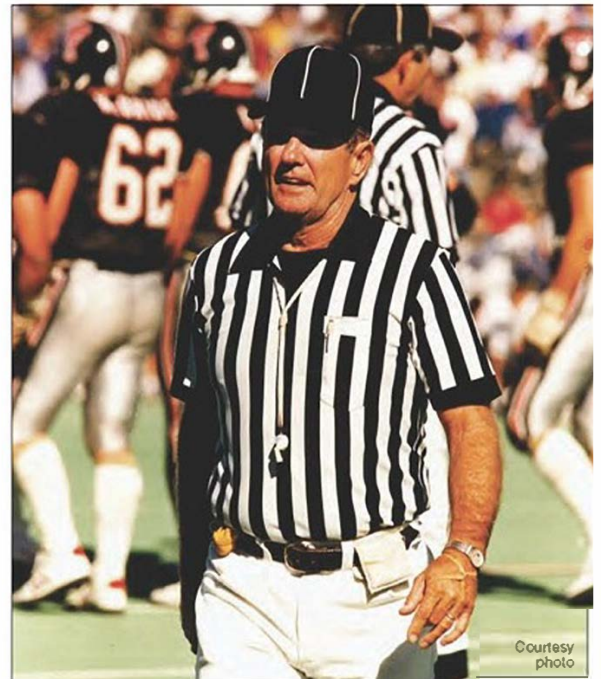
Beau was known throughout Texas as being one of the premiere officials in the state, Wortham said.

"His life was dedicated to being a fair and impartial official on the field. Nobody had an advantage when Beau Hicks was on the field," Wortham said. "He was dedicated to making sure everything was done precisely well, and he demanded that of the officials he worked with. That man knew the rules better than anybody I've ever known. He felt like it was so important for those kids to have a fair official on the field. He didn't do it for the fans. He didn't do it for the coaches. He didn't do it for the parents. He did it for those kids that dressed up every ... Friday night to play football."

It wasn't just Southeast Texans who Beau influenced. The San Antonio Football Chapter renamed their yearly football clinic to the Beau Hicks Memorial Clinic.

But Beau was more than just a football referee. Born in High Island on July 27, 1931, to Harry Thomas Hicks Sr. and Emily Merle Hicks, Beau was a lifelong resident who graduated from Lamar College. He went on to serve in the Marine Corps from 1950-52; he was also member of the Pipe Fitter's Local 195, member of the Masonic Tolerance Lodge No. 1165, and member of Wesley United Methodist Church.

Earlier this year, Beau was diagnosed with meso-



Courtesy photo

Beau Hicks, Texas Tech vs. TCU, November 7, 1987

thelioma, a rare form of cancer in the lungs.

"Once I found out he had this dreadful disease, I called him up and we drove around town," said Wortham. "He wanted to go to a seafood restaurant, so we went to Floyd's. This was about three and a half, four weeks ago. He looked good. He sounded good. He ate like a pig. He had crab bisque and almost licked the bowl. He had crab cakes and desert. In that short of a period of time, he passed."

Wortham added that once discovered, people with "meso" usually pass after 3-6 months.

"Beau was so tough, he endured most of that before he even went to the doctor," he said. "He died approximately a month, maybe five weeks from the time the doctor said he had meso."

He was preceded in death by his wife, Nelda Corrigan Hicks, on Feb. 5, 2014; his parents; brother Wayne Hicks; sisters Sandra Hicks-Barnes and Joyce Montau; and great-granddaughter Ava Jane Miller.

Survivors include his sons, Michael Hicks and Stephen Hicks; daughter Cindy Hicks; grandchildren Erin Hicks, Andrea Jestice, Stevie Hicks, Cassie Polozola, Josh Hicks,

Ashley Hicks and Krissy Hicks; great-grandchildren Dade Castille, Shaun Darrell, Olivia Jestice, Evee O'Bier, Mackenzie Lowe, Maddison Polozola, and Ford Jestice; sisters-in-law, Doris Knuppel and Polly Wells; sister, Margaret Jones; brother, Larry Joe Hicks; and a host of nieces and nephews.

A Facebook page was created titled "Tribute to Beau Hicks" for those who want to join and share their personal thoughts.

Funeral services are scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 3, at 10 a.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church in Beaumont (3810 N Major Drive). Graveside service and post-funeral reception will follow. Visitation will be on Tuesday, Sept. 2, from 5-7 p.m. at Broussard's Mortuary (1605 N. Major Drive).

In lieu of flowers, send money to benefit the TASO Southeast Texas Football Chapter of officials scholarship fund that was created to help football officials' children to receive college scholarship money. Call James Roberson at (409) 659-2855 to donate.

"We're going to miss him," said Wortham. "The community, the high school coaches and players have lost a star. No one can fill his shoes."

