

# TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY SPORTS SPOTLITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SHANAMAN SPORTS MUSEUM

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Dick Berg with Milan Mandaric, owner of the San Jose Earthquakes, soccer superstar Pele and Bruce Jenner, gold medalist athlete. *Photo courtesy of Brady Berg.*

## PUYALLUP PROMOTIONAL PRODIGY LEFT A LASTING MARK ON SPORTS WORLD

As a lawyer in the startup capital of the world, Brady Berg represents a lot of entrepreneurs. People with big ideas that sometimes seem a little crazy to those who don't understand their vision.

The Bay Area resident loves this work, and he thinks he knows why. It's in his blood.

Berg's father, Dick Berg, used his entrepreneurial mind to become a promotional trailblazer and leave an indelible mark on the sports world. The 1961 Puyallup High graduate led a life full of accomplishments. He played quarterback at Stanford, was in the Seattle Sonics first front office, helped the San Francisco 49ers expand their fan-base, was in on the ground floor as the U.S. began embracing soccer and helped the Olympics achieve unparalleled financial success.

"There are your obvious figures in sports," Brady Berg said, "and then there are the ones that we don't always remember. The secondary figures that we build the sports on the backs of."

That second category of sports icon is where Brady sees his father. A man who played a role in sports' evolution into one of America's favorite forms of entertainment.

"He was like the original Jackie Moon," said Brady, referring to the fictional character played by Will Ferrell in the 2008 movie "Semi-Pro". In the comedy, Ferrell is the owner, coach, pre-game announcer and starting power forward for the Flint Tropics of the American Basketball Association. The Moon character spends the film using his creativity to save his team.

Dick Berg, who died in 2018 at the age of 74, was inducted into the Puyallup High School Hall of Fame on Oct. 8, 2022. Brady Berg and Russ Berg, Dick's brother, were among those who attended the celebration.

Russ Berg says he was never surprised by his brother's success as a sports promoter. "He could sell anything to anybody."

Russ says that when Dick was in high school, he sold knife sets as a fundraiser for a school club. The exact details of the fundraiser escape him, but he does remember that several parents were upset when they learned their daughters had committed to buy knives from Dick. "He was a really good salesman," Russ said.

Dick Berg was the only boy in the top 10 of his graduat-

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# SHANAMAN Sports Museum

The mission of the Shanaman Sports Museum of Tacoma-Pierce County is to recreate the history of sports in the community by chronicling the evolution of various sports through written, visual and audio mediums and to educate the public about our sports heritage.

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### Follow Us

Facebook & Instagram: TacomaSportsMuseum  
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## JOIN THE TEAM

The Shanaman Sports Museum honors the history of sports and the rich culture of athletics in Tacoma-Pierce County. To maintain that tradition, the board of directors is pleased to invite the public to show their support by becoming a member.

For more information, please visit our website:  
[www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership](http://www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership)

## SCRAPBOOKS WANTED

Our latest venture is asking local athletes to consider donating their scrapbooks to be archived in the Shanaman Sports Museum. We have over 40 scrapbooks in our collection, which have been scanned and are available for viewing on our website:

[www.tacomasporthmuseum.com](http://www.tacomasporthmuseum.com)

So, if there are any old scrapbooks in the family archives – or attic, basement, garage or boxes – please keep us in mind and spread the word.

We are also looking for old sports programs of local area high school and college football and basketball games, state tournament and other athletic contests to be added to our Old School Programs collection.

Contact Marc Blau at 253-677-2872 for more information.



**May 16 • 5:30–8 p.m.**

Distinguished Achievement Awards and Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Hall of Fame inductions

**McGavick Conference Center at Clover Park Tech**

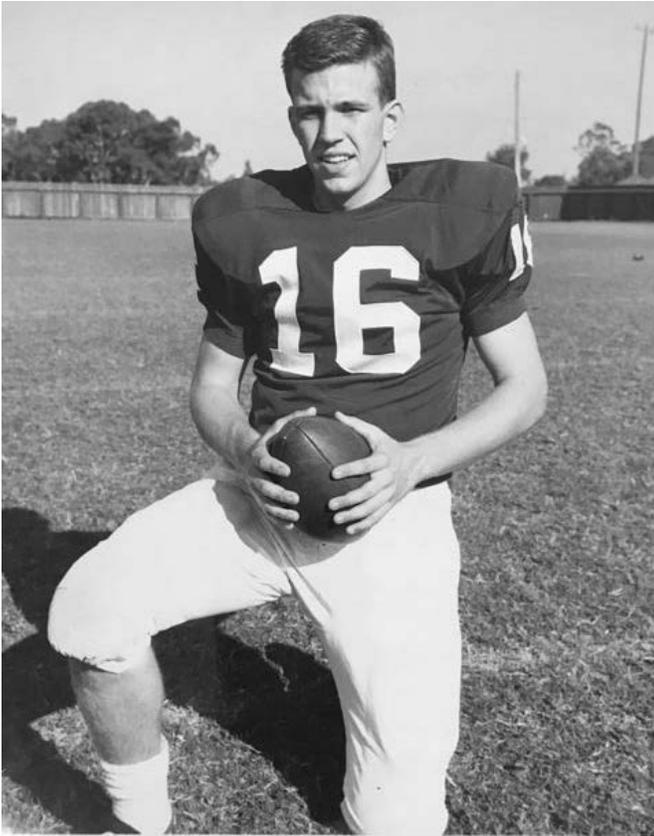
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For more information: 253-677-2872 or mhblau@comcast.net

## THANK YOU RECENT DONORS

**The Estate of Louise Mazzuca  
 Bob & Cindy Tardiff**

(Dick Berg, cont. from page 1)



Dick Berg was a quarterback at Stanford, in between John Brodie and Jim Plunkett. *Photo courtesy of Brady Berg.*

ing class at Puyallup, where he played football, basketball and track. He went to Stanford where he quarterbacked the football team to its first win over Notre Dame.

Dick went to law school at the University of Washington where he discovered his gift for promoting sports. His heart wasn't really into grad school, Brady said, but he loved the way he spent his spare time. He worked for the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. He helped the city lure an NBA team and then took the director of marketing job with the Sonics.

But Berg's run with the Sonics was short-lived. He was also serving as quarterback and general manager for the Seattle Rangers of the Continental Football League. He led the team to a league title. Berg helped coordinate an exhibition game for the San Francisco 49ers in 1968. The 49ers were so impressed with Berg they later offered him a job.

As the 49ers moved from Kezar Stadium to Candlestick Park in 1971, Berg helped bolster its fan-base as director of marketing. He coined the term "49er faithful" to describe the fans. The team still uses the term today.

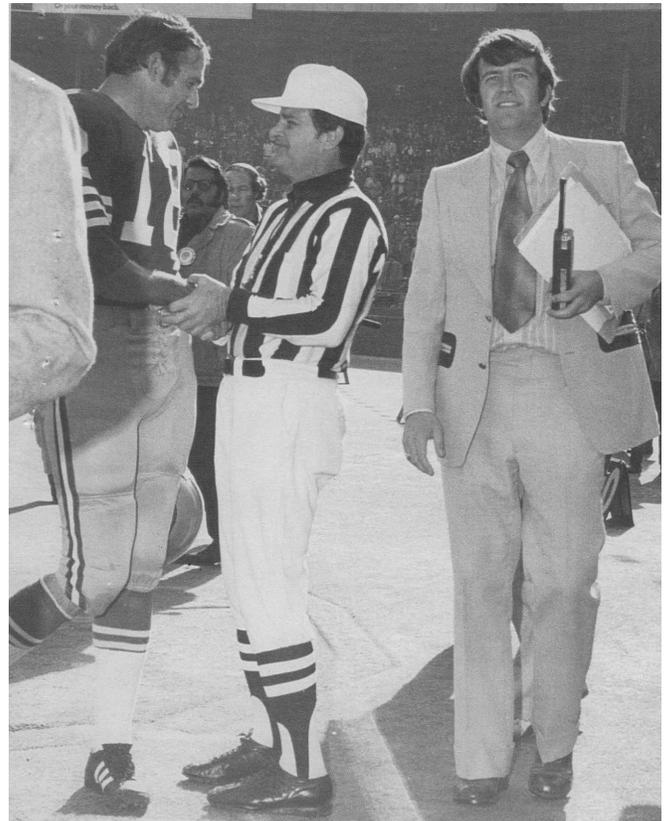
In a 1974 article, Sports Illustrated called Berg the "boy wonder of the 49ers."

After his time in the NFL, Berg was involved with the creation of the San Jose Earthquakes, a professional soccer team, and served as their first general manager. He is credited with coming up with the team's name. The team led the North American Soccer League in attendance.

Berg brought live tigers and bears to games. He introduced characters like Krazy George who whipped crowds into a frenzy. And he drove players to meet fans at shopping malls and youth soccer fields. "That grassroots approach; that's what he loved," Brady Berg said.

When the Quakes moved to Levi's Stadium, they brought Dick Berg back to kick out the ceremonial first ball in a game against the Seattle Sounders. Considering his connections to Seattle, the Quakes and the stadium's most high-profile tenant (the 49ers), Berg "was the perfect person to open the stadium," Brady Berg said. "...It was kind of like all of the threads of his career coming together."

In 1975, Lamar Hunt lured Berg to Dallas to serve as



As the Director of Marketing for the San Francisco 49ers, Dick coined the term "49er faithful" to describe the fans—a term still used today. Left to right: John Brodie, referee Tommy Bell and Berg. *Photo courtesy of Brady Berg.*

(Dick Berg, cont. from page 3)

GM for his soccer team, the Dallas Tornado. The team tripled its attendance. In a 1985 Los Angeles Times article, Paul Ridings, publicity director for Dallas' NASL team, called Berg "a wild man with some wild ideas."

After two seasons, Berg returned to the Bay Area as GM and co-owner of the Oakland Stompers soccer team. The team moved to Edmonton after one season.

It was about this time that tragedy struck. Berg's son, father and college roommate all died over a brief period of time. He decided to take a break and live out his dream of traveling the country by RV with his dog, Stomper (named after his soccer team).

Inspired by John Steinbeck's 1962 book "Travels with Charley," Berg spent 15 months visiting all 50 states. Brady joined for long stretches when his school schedule allowed. He remembers visiting Hawaii and Alaska with his dad.

He said his dad loved visiting landmark locations like the northern most point of the U.S. This meant taking a small plane to Point Barrow, Alaska, "but my dad was deathly afraid of small planes." It didn't help matters when they wanted to land, and the runway was covered with caribou. The plane had to circle until somebody could drive a pickup truck down the runway to scare off the animals.

Brady called the trip "incredible." Dick Berg authored a book called "Eavesdropping America" about the journey with Bay Area sports columnist Glenn Dickey.

Afterward, Berg worked for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics Organizing Committee. The '84 Olympics were the most financially successful in history at the time.

Brady Berg describes his father's years after the Olympics as "dabbling." He owned a chain of Gold's Gyms in Europe with musician Jermaine Jackson of The Jackson 5. He served as a consultant for the Los Angeles Express of the USFL. And he helped promote the Africa Games.

Dick had a gregarious personality that allowed him to connect with almost everybody he met, Brady said. "You'd swear everybody was his best friend."

But he was also "a pretty regular guy," Brady said. Brady said his father would speak regularly about his upbringing. About how he, as a child, was pudgy, had

a lisp, wore glasses and how he worked hard to overcome these things.

"And eventually he came out of his shell," Brady said. "And he did it in spades." And the sports world is more entertaining for it.

*Craig Hill is a contributing writer for the Shanaman Sports Museum and former sports reporter and outdoor writer for The News Tribune.*



Miesha Tate won the UFC bantamweight title in 2016.

## **FROM THE FRANKLIN PIERCE MAT TO THE UFC TITLE, MIESHA TATE FINDS HERSELF IN THE RIGHT PLACE**

Sometimes, seemingly random factors can work together to make a difference in your life. For mixed martial arts competitor Miesha Tate, two of the most important factors may just have been where she grew up and, well, a hatred for basketball.

## (Miesha Tate, cont. from page 4)

“The only option for girls to play sports during the winter season was basketball or joining the wrestling team, and I guess I hated basketball more than wrestling,” Tate said with a laugh.

That other factor – where she grew up – also had an impact. For a young girl attending high school in the early 2000s, Washington state in general – and the South Puget Sound’s Franklin Pierce High School in particular – afforded her chances that may not have existed elsewhere.

“I feel like the ‘W’ in Washington state stands for women,” Tate said. “It just has been very progressive for women in sports and in all areas for quite some time. I realize now how much opportunity for girls there was compared to other places. I’m very grateful that, even though there wasn’t a girls’ wrestling program, my school allowed me to participate with the boys’ program.”

Gender was never much of a problem with her wrestling team. In fact, she received the Coach’s Award her senior year, given to only one athlete on the team. Tate’s professional career has included UFC, Strikeforce, and Freestyle Cage Fighting Bantamweight Championships and the 2011 Female Fighter of the Year at the World MMA Awards, among numerous other honors. Despite that lengthy resume, Tate still considers that Coach’s Award “one of my most prized accomplishments in my career.”

While Tate acknowledges that she rarely won matches against male competitors – “they were just too experienced and strong at that point” – she only ever recalls losing once to a female opponent in high school. That was her first-ever match, against a senior.

“I lost that first match, but I was really inspired,” Tate said. “There was a woman who had been wrestling, and she was a senior, and she was great. You know, she beat me, so it was a great learning and humbling experience and motivated me to be like that.”

That motivation worked, as Tate proceeded to win the rest of her matches against female competitors in her high school career. Her career covered a historic time for girls’ wrestling in Washington. The WIAA implemented a state tournament for girls’ wrestling during Tate’s junior year. During breaks in the boys’ state tournament, the girls would take to the mats for their competition.

“It wasn’t at the same level as the boys’ tournament, with a round-robin style tournament,” Tate said, “but it gave us girls an opportunity to be present at the pinnacle of wrestling season in the Tacoma Dome and competing on those mats.”

Unfortunately for Tate, she broke her ankle two weeks before that inaugural tournament. That only increased her motivation to come back “with a vengeance” her senior year, storming through the tournament and claiming the 2005 state championship.

“I can’t tell you how amazing it was to have the opportunity to wrestle under those lights and with that same feeling and competitive atmosphere that was there for the boys,” Tate said. “It set a tone, and who knows how many little girls might have been there watching their brothers wrestling and realizing that girls could do it, too. I have to imagine it had some ripple effect.”

The year after Tate graduated, Franklin Pierce established its own girls wrestling team. Tate recognizes the role she and other female trailblazers played in creating the foundation for these increased opportunities.

“I didn’t realize at the time that maybe what I had done and the women who came before me with all their hard work and dedication made a difference in gaining that support and changing people’s perceptions about what we could do,” Tate said. “It’s probably the most valuable lesson I’ve learned in my career, along with the importance of working hard and that it’s not always about winning.”

“I really didn’t win very much in high school – since most of my matches were against boys that were bigger and stronger – but I learned that if you work hard and don’t separate yourself, you can accomplish great things and change the way people view you and the assumptions they might have. That was really powerful and impactful for my life.”

After graduating from Franklin Pierce, Tate found her way into MMA while attending Central Washington University. That led to a professional career that has taken her to the pinnacle of the sport. On March 5, 2016, Tate beat Holly Holm to win the Ultimate Fighting Championship bantamweight championship. Even with success on a national stage, Tate never takes for granted the role her home state played in making all of that possible.

(Miesha Tate cont. from page 5)



Miesha Tate spars in training.

“Thinking back, there was even a girl who played football on the Franklin Pierce team while I was there,” Tate said. “Just the fact that those were not things that were set against us, I really appreciate that Washington state has abided by the idea that girls can compete, too. Not every state was there. That’s special, and I’m so grateful I grew up in Washington for those reasons, and not somewhere else where I wouldn’t have had that opportunity.”

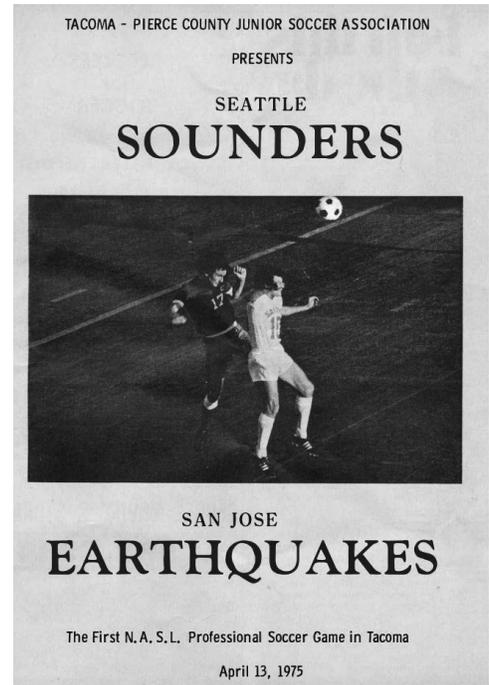
Historic careers are built on hard work, dedication, and talent, but sometimes it’s the often-overlooked and seemingly minor factors that also make it possible. Things like where you grow up and just how much you don’t want to play basketball.

*Tyler Scott is a contributing writer for the Shanaman Sports Museum. A Puget Sound native and Pacific Lutheran University alumnus, Tyler has worked in several small college sports information offices in Washington and Oregon and also provided freelance high school sports coverage for The News Tribune.*



**Renew your  
Sports Museum membership  
for 2023 at  
[tacomasportsmuseum.com/membership/](https://tacomasportsmuseum.com/membership/)**

## FROM THE COLLECTION



The Seattle Sounders closed the 2022 Major League Soccer season on October 9 against the San Jose Earthquakes at Lumen Field. You probably didn’t know that 47 years before, on April 13, 1975, the same teams met in the first North American Soccer League game played in Tacoma. In the collection of the Sports Museum, you can find the program from that game. It is one of many archived programs that you can flip through digitally at: <https://www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/sports-programs/>. In this case, click on soccer and scroll down to the section of professional programs.

The exhibition game raised money for the Tacoma Pierce County Junior Soccer Association. The program includes photos of players from the roster of each team as well as descriptions of each of the Pierce County youth soccer associations in their early days. On page 18, you can see that 13-year-old Jeff Durgan was recognized for his performance in a skills competition. He became one of the most prominent professional soccer players from Tacoma and a member of the Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Hall of Fame. Kevin Stock was among the 11-year-old winners. He went on to be a professional baseball player. His brother Jeff was a professional soccer player.

**Hundreds of other programs from many sports are available as flipbooks in the online archive. There are also over 6,000 cataloged photos available featuring athletes and events in the Tacoma area.**

## YOUR DONATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

While the Sports Museum continues to work toward a new physical location, the lack of public display does not mean that the Museum is without expenses. The Museum receives some small grants to help with basic costs but needs more funding to cover the cost of storage for our collection and for the ongoing effort to gather, catalog and digitally present new scrapbooks, trophies, uniforms and other artifacts donated by local standout athletes and team members.

Our two primary sources of funding are annual memberships and charitable donations.

You can become a member or renew your membership annually at <https://www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership/>. Membership options range from \$50 to \$300. We appreciate each dollar and have used the money to keep local sports history alive virtually with bios, recordings and virtual displays on the Museum website.

Beyond membership, there are many options for making donations to the Sports Museum. Please see the Giving Guide on our website at <https://www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/waystogive/> to evaluate which options best fit your financial plans and charitable intent.

Your donations will support the ongoing virtual experience of the Sports Museum and also allow us to seek opportunities to return to a physical space as soon as possible.

While cash/check/credit card donations are welcome, there may be more tax-advantageous ways for you to give. Through our investment account at the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, the Sports Museum is able to receive donated shares of investments or property. This type of donation could allow you to avoid capital gains taxes that would otherwise be applicable if you sold an investment and donated the cash proceeds instead. They also provide another tax benefit as a deductible expense for tax filers who itemize deductions on their return.

Qualified Charitable Distributions from IRAs (for people over age 70½) are also a good way to reduce your income taxes. QCDs reduce taxes even for people who don't itemize their tax return to claim deductions for donations.

As you consider your longer-term charitable giving and estate plans, please consider naming the Sports Museum

as a beneficiary of your IRA or life insurance policy. Of course, you don't have to wait to make a meaningful impact on the preservation and story telling of Pierce County sports history. You can make a gift while you are living so that you can see the impact and enjoy the contribution you've made to sustaining the legacy of athletics in our area.

### THE LOCKER ROOM CHAT

[WWW.TACOMASPORTSMUSEUM.COM/LOCKERROOM-](http://WWW.TACOMASPORTSMUSEUM.COM/LOCKERROOM-)



[www.rainierasphalt.com](http://www.rainierasphalt.com)

Watch for the following episodes on our website beginning in February 2023.

Marv Harshman—Football and basketball star at Pacific Lutheran and for Tacoma Indians and Tacoma Mountaineers. Long-time respected basketball coach at Pacific Lutheran, Washington State and UW.

Ken Still—Twenty-three years on the PGA Tour before competing on the Senior Tour. Member of the 1969 U.S. Ryder Cup team. Long-time ambassador for athletics in Tacoma-Pierce County.

Jim Kittilsby—Jim enjoyed a baseball career as the Assistant Ticket Manager for the Tacoma Giants in 1960 and was the first person to join the staff of the Seattle Pilots in 1969. In 1971, he returned to Tacoma as assistant AD and Sports Information Director at PLU.

Gordy Pfeifer—A three-sport athlete at the College of Puget Sound, Pfeifer won 16 world, national and professional handball titles, including back-to-back U.S. singles championships in 1971-72. He also was named to the All-World SlowPitch Softball Team in 1968.

Steve Whitaker—Whitaker, a 1962 Lincoln grad, homered in six of his first 19 games playing in the Yankees outfield alongside Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris in 1966.

Ron Cey—A three-sport star at Mt. Tahoma, the “Penguin” was a mainstay at third base for the L.A. Dodgers from 1973 through 1982. Cey was a six-time All-Star and co-MVP of the 1981 World Series.



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