

Robbie Nichols: Special Memories of a Super Bowl Player

EDITOR'S NOTE: It was with sadness that I heard about the June 24 passing of Robert Boyd "Robbie" Nichols.

I had the good fortune of meeting Mr. Nichols and his spouse, Belva, early in 2010. I had known that he was a former NFL player and wanted to talk to him about his experiences. The couple graciously invited to their home for an interview.

I had first encountered Robbie when he was helping coach the Shidler football team. Dusty Yauk, the head coach at the time, told me he had the privilege of having a former NFL player help him with the coaching tasks. "When he speaks, the kids listen," was the accompanying statement. I observed Nichols walking the sidelines during games and saw first hand his approach to coaching high-school-age young men.

Not only did Mr. Nichols serve as an assistant football coach at Shidler, he also coached the girls' basketball team for three years.

When I called him for an interview, he invited me to his Kaw Lake home, where I was warmly received. I came to feel as if I had known Robbie and Belva much longer than just the short time it took to get enough information for a column.

Having been a Baltimore Colts and Johnny Unitas fan since listening to the 1958 NFL Championship game in which the Colts defeated the New York Giants in overtime, I was in awe of his experiences and his stories about being a member of the Colts and about playing in a Super Bowl.

One of my first thoughts when I heard of Mr. Nichols' passing was that, at 64, he was much too young.

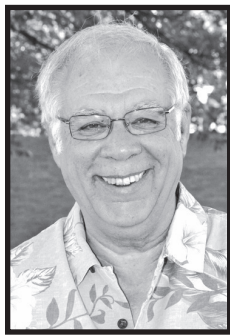
In his memory, I choose to rerun the column that first appeared March 24, 2010.

By DAVID MILLER
News Sports Writer

Doesn't every kid dream about being a professional athlete or a Top 40 singer or a movie star? I know I did. My thoughts would often go to Major League Baseball, where I dreamed of becoming a teammate of players like Ted Williams, Yogi Berra, Mickey Mantle or Willie Mays.

My daydreams never became reality. But I had the pleasure last week in talking to someone who actually lived what would be a childhood dream for many a young man — being a member of a team that won a Super Bowl.

Robbie Nichols, who lives in



This and That About Sports

By David Miller

the Kaw City area, was a member of the Baltimore Colts when they defeated Dallas in Super Bowl V after the 1970 season. His pro career wasn't a long one. He was with the Colts only two years and the Super Bowl year was his last in the NFL.

But he has some very special memories of that short career.

"Being in the same locker room with guys like Johnny Unitas, Tom Matte, John Mackey and Mike Curtis, was pretty awesome, especially for a small-town kid from Cleveland, Okla.," Nichols said.

Unitas needs little in the way of introduction as few players can match the impact he had on the game. Matte had been a quarterback in college at Ohio State, but was converted to running back by the Colts. Mackey was another who would be elected to the Hall of Fame from his tight end position. Curtis was a standout at linebacker.

There were some other pretty well known players on that team. Bubba Smith, all 295 pounds of him, was stationed at left defensive end. Earl Morrall was the backup quarterback for Unitas, getting quite a bit of playing time due to injuries Unitas suffered during the year. In fact, Morrall got some playing time in the Super Bowl after an injury sidelined the Hall of Fame quarterback. Billy Ray Smith was an offensive tackle and Bill Curry was the starting center. Coach of the Colts that year was Don McCafferty, in his first year at the helm.

Nichols was a reserve outside linebacker. He played behind Curtis, Ted Hendricks, also known as the 'Mad Stork', and Ray May. all three all-Pro. But he was able to see some action during the year.

Among his accomplishments were sacking New York Jets legend Joe Namath, intercept-

ing a Lenny Dawson pass and tackling O. J. Simpson in the open field.

"I did those things, but what I'm remembered for is picking up Bob Lilly's helmet and handing it back to him after he threw it in the Super Bowl," Nichols said.

"It's funny. I intercepted a Lenny Dawson pass, and ran it back 20 yards. When I got to the sidelines, I got my butt chewed because we were supposed to be blitzing on the play," he remembered.

Nichols played college football at Tulsa University. He was a freshman at Tulsa when all-American quarterback Jerry Rhome was a senior. Another all-American Howard Twilley was a member of the Tulsa team. Glenn Dobbs was the Tulsa coach.

As a member of the Hurricane squad, Nichols played linebacker on defense and tight end on offense. A highlight of his years there was a win over Arkansas. A low light was an 100-6 loss to Houston.

"We had played the Air Force Academy and many of our players picked up the Hong Kong flu. Most of the team was sick when we played Houston," he said.

Because of his play at Tulsa, he later was chosen on the Tulsa World All-Decade team for the 1960s that included players from OU, OSU Arkansas and Tulsa.

He also competed in track and set a Missouri Valley record for the discus.

On the day of the NFL draft after his senior year at Tulsa, he wasn't selected, but that night, the Colts called and he signed a contract at the airport.

The U. S. government also called, as the Vietnam War was going on hot and heavy, but Nichols failed his induction physical due to high blood pressure. He was carried on "military reserve" status for a



BELVA AND ROBBIE Nichols hold a uniform that he wore as a member of the Baltimore Colts Super Bowl V team.

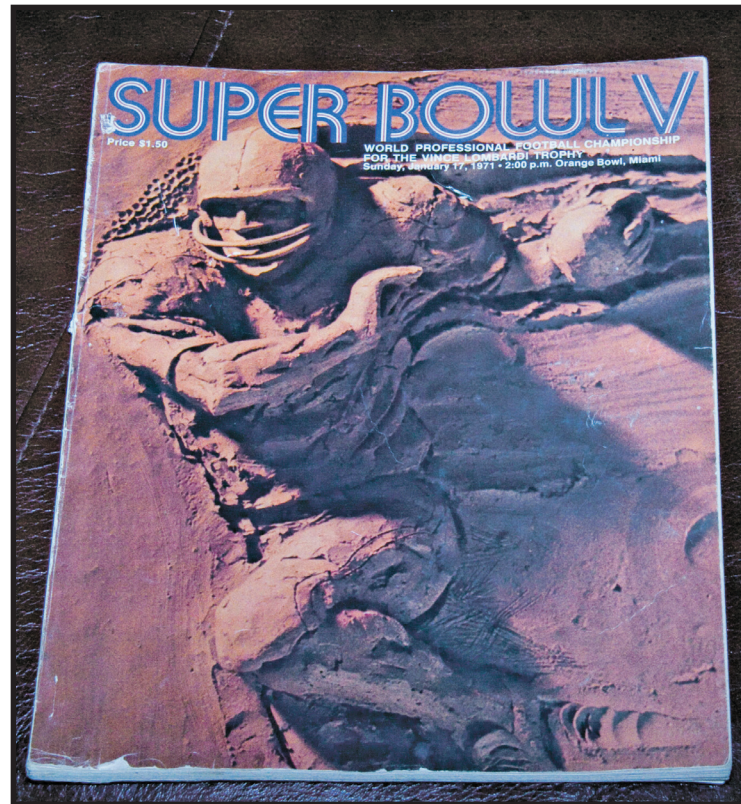
year and then made the Colts roster a year later.

After his Super Bowl year, he signed a two-year contract with the Colts. The rumor mill had the Boston Patriots being interested in trading for him, and he gave the Colts an ultimatum "Trade me or I'm going home."

"I didn't see much future in staying with the Colts. They had three all-pro linebackers and I didn't think there was any way I could break into the starting lineup ahead of them. I thought I could have started for the Patriots. Being a rookie from Cleveland, Okla., I didn't know any better than to sign a two-year contract. But, I did, and the Colts refused to trade me. So, I went home. It was my fault. If I hadn't signed that contract, I probably could have had a longer career."

From that time on, Nichols' career was in coaching. He coached at the high school level in football, basketball and track at Cleveland, Henryetta, Hominy, Sasakwa, Cascia Hall and Sand Springs.

After retirement from Sand Springs, he located in the Kaw Lake area, and since then has done some coaching at nearby Shidler, helping with football and coaching girls basketball



THE Super Bowl V program cover (take note of the \$1.50 price)

for three years.

He and his wife, Belva, are happy in their retirement home on Kaw Lake.

"When we first moved here,

our kids and other people asked us why we located way out here," Belva said. "But now they can't wait to visit us. They have come to love it."



A PHOTO of Robbie Nichols in his Baltimore Colts uniform, upper center, can be seen as it appeared in 2010 in the Nichols home



AN INSIDE page of the Super Bowl V program showing an ad featuring Johnny Unitas (19).

Blackwell-Tonkawa Relay for Life Raises More Than \$75,000



WALKERS in the Blackwell-Tonkawa Relay for Life raised more than \$75,000 for cancer research.

TONKAWA — The 14th Blackwell/Tonkawa Relay For Life was held June 24 on the campus of Northern Oklahoma College.

The totaled raised by the two communities was \$75,109.65, with a net figure of \$71,793.00.

Donations can still be made by contacting Michelle Bishop at the First National Bank of Oklahoma at (580) 628-2265 or Kari Scott at (580) 628-0099.

Thirteen teams participated, raising the following amounts:

1. Shebester-Bechtel-"Willy Wonka's" \$20,116.96
 2. Southwest Cupid \$15,150.74
 3. THS Spicers \$5,160
 4. First National Bank of OK, Tonkawa \$3,678
 5. Northern Oklahoma College \$3,655
 6. Pam's Posse \$3,638.40
 7. Survivors \$3,531
 8. Purple Passion \$1,834.60
 9. Mission Possible \$1,756.75
 10. Wal-Mart of Blackwell \$1,316.44
 11. Central National Bank \$1,100
 12. Kenna's Crew \$1,069
 13. Little Rascals \$949.26
- The top fundraising indi-

vidual was Bill Simpson with \$9,645. He also walked 60 laps or 20 miles during the event.

Coming in second and third respectively, were Melissa Nunn and Shelly Pennington.

The top online individual was Dessa Hunter with \$450 and the top online team was Southwest Cupid.

The Most Spirited Team went to Mission Possible and the Most Spirited Individual was awarded to Fern Lively.

The most Creative Campsite Award went to Pam's Posse and First National Bank of Oklahoma.

The Light of Hope Award for the most individual lumina-ria sales went to Misty Leeper; total sold was 413 for \$2,065.

The basket auction raised \$3,437.50 and the Star of Hope contest raised \$1,134.15.

Other awards are as follows:
Star of Hope, Shebester-Bechtel
Suitecase Relay, Shebester-Bechtel/First National Bank
Cheetos Head Contest, Pam's Posse
Frozen T-Shirt Contest, Mission Possible.

Contact Midweek

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