

## Written by: Ed Staton

Hundreds will turn out to honor Nick Revon's memory on Thursday at the Saint Louis Cathedral.

Visitation will be Thursday from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. A funeral mass will follow immediately after the visitation.

Revon, 79, collapsed on June 23 and died following a series of heart problems last Monday.

He remained a representative of a time that has vanished from sports and the United States. He played and coached for the love of the game, not for money. He was a legend in his places, from St. Aloysius, to Hinds Junior College, to Southern Miss, to the National Industrial Basketball League to coaching, ruling from the 1950s through the 1980s.

He grew up in the French Quarter and at a very young age the boy realized that his best chance he had on earth was with sports. His father was Indian and his mother was Cuban. The father deserted the family after Nick was born, and Mrs. Revon, who didn't speak English, was left with a family to raise. He spent his early years struggling through a hungry childhood.

"I would jump and touch the signs hanging over the Quarter street," remembered Revon. "A lot of the kids were interested in stealing, drinking and smoking, but I only wanted to play sports, and I spent my time when I wasn't working, on the playgrounds."

He became a starting forward as a seventh-grader at St. Aloysius and helped the Crusaders win the state championship in 1947. Coach Johny Altobello, now 87, calls Revon the "best all-round athlete to ever come out of New Orleans."

He also played football, baseball and participated in track and field in high school. He was an amazing jumper for his size and became known as "The Cat" at Southern Miss.

He couldn't play at St. Aloysius because he had used up his high school eligibility since he started playing when he was a seventh grader. He played his junior and senior prep seasons at Hinds Junior College. He could dunk a ball as a seventh grader.

Kentucky offered a scholarship, but he would be eligible for only two seasons because of NCAA rules. Southern Miss, a member of the small college NAIA, offered him a four-year scholarship.

He was a four-year letterman at Southern Miss and is their all-time leading scorer with 2,136 points in 122 games for a 17.5 points per game average. He converted 76.2 per cent of his free throws over four seasons and still holds six school records.

Those records include single-season marks for scoring (737 points), field goals made (266), free throws made (205) and free throws attempted (267), in addition to his career records for points, he set the standard for free throws with 538.

"I'd stand front of an opponent and wouldn't let him get around me," said Revon. "Finally, they'd become frustrated and foul me."

He was known for his shooting touch as well as his ball-handling and passing skills. He was an early-day Chris Paul of the Hornets.

He made his debut with Southern Miss during the 1950-51 season and although he missed nearly half the year with a broken foot still managed to average 13.7 point per game. Coach Lee Floyd and the USM fans knew they had something special. Floyd, father of former Hornets and USC coach Tim, tossed the keys to Revon with instructions to take care of the gym. Revon liked to practice after practice was over.

Revon took USM (then Mississippi Southern College) title NAIA national tournament three straight years.

During his USM days, he also was a star baseball player and excelled on the track team in the high jump and broad jump. He high jumped 6-3 and long jumped 23-6.

The Minneapolis Lakers selected him in the sixth round in the 1954 NBA draft, but he opted to play in the National Industrial Basketball League instead where he enjoyed a standout professional career.

"The NBA back then wasn't what it is today," said Revon. "I was better off in the Industrial League."

With a wife and family now, he returned to New Orleans to coach for 24 years. He coached at St. Aloysius, East Jefferson and Ridgewood. His East Jeff squads won 299 games as well as capturing 9 district titles while reaching the state playoffs 15 times in a stint that ended with the 1986-87 season.

"I sometimes wonder how I would have done as a college coach," said Revon. "I regret that I didn't try it."

If the coach saw a student who was too shy to try out for the team he would take him aside and instruct him to run laps around the track to develop his stamina if he wanted to be a basketball player. Next, he would place the student under the backboards and practice taking down rebounds. Next, he could try out for the team. His East Jeff teams were known for their stamina, defense and fast breaks.

"If i thought a kid had too free time away from basketball, I'd tell him to get a part-time job and open a savings account," said Revon. "They would come back and thank me years later."

For his successes, Revon earned induction into the Louisiana and Mississippi Hall of Fames as well as the USM M-Club Hall of Fame and the New Orleans Sugar Bowl Hall of Fame.

Going into the Louisiana Hall of Fame was probably the biggest honor I ever received," said Revon.

He spent his final years supervising his sports bar, "Coach's Corner," at West Napoleon and Transcontinental, in Metairie. The saloon is full of Revon's memorabilia from USM and the Industrial League.

This cycle of nature is complete, but Revon's love of his fellow man and his spirit live on.