

A LEGEND IS LOST

An amazing athlete passes from the scene

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By **Bill Bumgarner**

An acquaintance of mine -- a recently retired former employee of this daily publication -- related a story to me about the late Nick Revon and his seemingly insatiable appetite to compete.

"I was playing in a basketball league game against Nick's team," he recalled. "Nick was playing in his third game of the night and he had two more games to play after that. The other four players on my team picked the guys they wanted to guard. I got stuck with Nick. No one wanted to guard him."

Nick Revon died at approximately 8 a.m. on June 30 at age 79. After his life support had been disconnected at noon June 29, the heart that carried him full court at full speed for so many decades hung tough for another 20 hours before it finally gave way.

Facts and figures usually define the career of an athlete, especially one elected into a host of halls of fame, including the state halls in Louisiana and Mississippi.

The fact that Revon earned All-State recognition in the seventh through ninth grades, the fact that his play at St. Aloysius once warranted a personal workout before Kentucky basketball coaching legend Adolph Rupp, the fact that he was drafted by the NBA and the fact that he coached highly successful teams on two stops in high school at St. Aloysius and East Jefferson all contributed to his Hall of Fame credentials.

But some figures are hopelessly impossible to compile. In how many pickup and league basketball games did he play? Suffice to say, it was in the thousands. How many baseball and football games? How many track and field meets? Nick Revon never met a game he could resist.

Despite his 5-foot-9 stature, Revon always considered himself blessed with jumping ability -- vertically and horizontally. He could leap and touch a 10-foot high basketball rim and he could long jump 23 feet, 6 inches. And he chunked the javelin at meets well into his 60s.

"I remember he was going to Florida to compete in a senior track meet," recalled Revon's friend Roy Hoffman, who was a football standout at St. Aloysius during prep's Golden Era. "Nick's car caught fire on the I-10. Most people would have called home and gotten a ride back. Not Nick. He hitchhiked to the meet and called his family for a ride home when it was over. For all I know, he just left the car there on the side of the road."

For all his accomplishments on court, on diamonds, on fields and from a coaching chair, Revon considered his induction into the Louisiana Hall of Fame in Natchitoches as his defining moment. He savored all three days of the ceremonies held in Shreveport-Bossier in 2002. His beaming presence was everywhere, shaking hands, swapping tales and drinking in every moment. The honor was meaningful and Nick appeared happy yet humbled.

By contrast, a rankled Nick once authored one of the most unique telephone calls ever received by our sports department.

Apparently a patron at his Coach's Corner sports tavern in Metairie had questioned Revon's basketball abilities, probably because of his diminutive size. So Revon called the newspaper for some proof and confirmation to quiet this "doubting Thomas."

"This guy doesn't believe I led the city in scoring," Revon said. "Do you still have those statistics available?"

"No, Nick, I don't. That was two years before I was born."

Revon's family said it was a lifetime dream of his for the funeral to be held at St. Louis Cathedral since he was first handed a basketball as a youngster attending St. Louis Cathedral Grammar School. By the hundreds, they attended last week, each with a story to tell, each hoping to leave with a new one about "The Cat."

Following the services, our trip home unknowingly took us past the corner of Rampart and Esplanade, past the barren slab which once housed St. Aloysius High and its tiny, matchbox gym -- the site where Nicholas Arthur Revon's drive and determination and his dribbling and shooting earned him the distinction as one of the finest athletes in the history of New Orleans athletics, the place where that insatiable desire to compete first surfaced.

So be forewarned Lord, don't go one-on-one with this guy.