



**R. Gaines Baty, *Champion of the Barrio: The Legacy of Coach Buryl Baty*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2015. 288 pp. Hardcover \$24.95.**

*Champion of the Barrio: The Legacy of Coach Buryl Baty* is a son's memoir of his father, a high school football coach who defended his Mexican American players against violent bigotry in post-World War II El Paso, Texas. R. Gaines Baty traces Coach Buryl Baty's unpretentious beginnings in Paris, Texas, through his standout years playing quarterback for the Texas A&M Aggies, and onto his days coaching at Bowie High School in El Paso. When Buryl Baty was a teenager, football was all that kept him in school, and as coach and assistant principal he would use football as a metaphor to inspire his players to approach life both on and off the field with discipline and pride.

*Champion of the Barrio* opens with the Bowie High School football team rolling into the small, West Texas town of Snyder for a game in September 1954. They were met with vehement anti-Mexican discrimination and were forced to relocate to a motel outside the town limits. Coach Baty threatened to have the game canceled when a café owner attempted to bar his young men from entering the restaurant. But, both the owner and the residents of Snyder valued high school football even above their racism, and the team was reluctantly allowed inside. This moment is the reader's first glimpse into Baty's fierce loyalty to his players and his fight for the respect of their basic human dignity.

R. Gaines Baty is clearly in awe of his father's life and has written his story with passion and love. After chapters full of "Friday night lights," play-by-plays, and accounts of Buryl Baty's university and war experiences, the younger Baty delves into the elder's remarkable coaching career. Coach Baty ran tough, well-organized practices, first in Luling and later in El Paso. He emphasized "education, discipline, and good behavior." He encouraged his students from the impoverished Segundo Barrio to graduate high school and to aspire to a college education. Baty also loved his family deeply, and the stories of his life with "swell" wife Bo are sweetly romantic interludes for those not as impressed with tales of pigskin glory.

After Baty's tragic death at the age of 30, the Segundo Barrio plunged into mourning. In 1998, many former players united to rename the Bowie High School stadium for him and Jerry Simmang, who was also killed in the 1954 car wreck that took Baty. The fervent devotion displayed by Coach Baty's former students inspired R. Gaines Baty to get to know the father he had lost when he was so young. His research into newspaper articles, books, family diaries, and the personal accounts of those who were most affected by Baty resulted in this memoir. Readers who are interested in Texas high school football history, the history of discrimination against Latinos in Texas, or the history of Texas A&M University's culture pre- and post-World War II will appreciate *Champion of the Barrio: The Legacy of Coach Buryl Baty*.

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