



Munoz: Hall of Famer in Latino community, too

Chaffey High graduate still keeps tabs on area where he grew up

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ONTARIO - Supervising the third annual Anthony Munoz Football Camp this weekend was the middle part of a busy two weeks for the Pro Football Hall of Fame offensive tackle and Chaffey High School graduate.

Before overseeing the two-day camp at Chaffey High School, run in coordination with the United States Army, Munoz was in Chicago on Wednesday receiving the Roberto Clemente Award for Sports Excellence. After flying back to his home in suburban Cincinnati today, Munoz will be in Canton, Ohio next weekend to help welcome the newest class of Hall of Fame inductees.

"That's something I take a lot of pride in," Munoz said. "I make sure I go back every year, break out the gold jacket and support the new guys coming in.

"There's only 150 of us still alive, so it's something that I take a lot of pride in. It's a special honor to be a member of that fraternity."

Membership in the Pro Football Hall of Fame

isn't the only thing that Munoz, who will turn 51 on Aug. 19, takes pride in. The 1976 graduate of Chaffey High School - where he played baseball and basketball as well as football - frequently visits his alma mater and hometown and keeps tabs on the community where he grew up.

"Every time I come back here, memories come back to me," Munoz said. "My old house on Garfield Avenue is now gone, which is sad, but I enjoy driving around here and showing people where I grew up.

"When I'm away from this place, it will seem like it's a long time ago, but when I walk on this field, the memories come right back. It almost seems yesterday I was here, learning and growing under the coaches and trying to get better."

Although he becomes more separated from his Hall of Fame football career and his high school days, Munoz continues to grow. The Anthony Munoz Foundation, founded in 2002, is as charitable and profitable as ever, as Munoz runs three separate football camps - this weekend's in Ontario along with two others in the Cincinnati metro area. And his family continues to grow as well.

"I had my first grandson (Jacob) this past year and I have two more on the way," Munoz said. "I'm very excited about being a grandfather and my wife (DeDe) is very excited about being a grandmother. It's one of the greatest feelings in the world."

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Munoz's standing in the Latino community also is something worth taking pride in, although Munoz won't mention it. Jim Semon, Munoz's baseball coach at Chaffey from 1973-76 and the namesake of the Munoz Foundation's Inspirational Award, marveled about Munoz's humility.

"He is one of the best people I've dealt with in all my years of coaching," Semon said. "I never had a son and Anthony never had a father, so we developed a special bond because of that. With all he's done and all he's accomplished, it's a credit to him that he could stay humble. I am not humble when it comes to that, so I really respect that he is.

"With all the great things he has done in football and with his charitable organizations, it's a honor to even be associated with him. When he told me about the Jim Semon Inspirational Award a few years ago, I embraced him and cried. To see what he has become makes me proud."

Semon also mentioned he was told that Munoz, who is a commercial spokesperson for several companies in the Cincinnati area, was regarded as the third most influential Latino athlete in the United States behind Pele and Roberto Clemente.

That's not something Munoz will play up in conversation, but he does attribute his success to the things he learned while growing up in Ontario.

"This place has had a profound impact on who I am," Munoz said. "I remember playing on these

fields, lifting weights in that weight room, being part of this community. I've tried to learn new things everywhere I've been and use them to help myself and the people in my community grow."