

'Legends' stirs soul of Cougars

GO 2 GUY

JIM MOORE



I WAS NOT aware of this until Wednesday, but another book is out about Washington football, and I'd like to endorse it because the author is Greg Brown, a former P-I teammate.

"What it Means to be a Husky" must be a short book. I could cover that with eight words: "Always thinking you're better than you really are."

Apparently there are other definitions, and Brown got those from Don James and notable players from the past. I'll bet it's a great read for Husky fans.

Meanwhile in Pullman, the final DVD in Jeff McQuarrie's "Legends of the Palouse" series will be released at a launch party in the field house before Saturday's game against UCLA.

There are so many legends in Washington State football history that it took three DVDs to properly cover them all. "Legends of the Palouse Part Three – Raising the Bar" captures Cougars football from 1996 through 2006, including two Rose Bowls and the Holiday Bowl victory over Texas in '03.

McQuarrie, who lives in Olympia and went to WSU in the mid-1980s, said the project was personally fulfilling and financially draining.

"But I didn't want to be an old man wondering why I didn't do something I was passionate about," he said.

"Legends of the Palouse Part Three" explores more than just football seasons – it gets to the root of why Cougars love WSU so much. McQuarrie proposes five theories, one of which involves the camaraderie of being an underdog.

"We're not handed things on a silver platter like our Husky counterparts," he said.

One part of the movie shows the most fanatical Cougs, including those who brought Butch to their weddings and had the fight song piped into the hospital room for their child's birth.

(That sounded familiar: May 12, 1991, Evergreen Hospital, I sang the fight song when the Go 2 Girl was born, and lo and behold, she's a smart kid who now wants to be a Coug herself.)

Using a panel of experts and voters from Cougfan.com, McQuarrie selected the top WSU team of all-time, and the results are announced in Part Three. The top five contenders are the 1915, 1930,

1997, 2002 and 2003 teams.

The vote was divided, just as it would be if you asked any WSU fan to pick a favorite Coug of all-time. I know this: Jason Gesser would be mentioned as much as anyone.

On one leg, Gesser led the Cougars into the 2003 Rose Bowl and is the cover boy on "Legends of the Palouse Part Three." He will be at the field house at 12:30 p.m. signing autographs and promoting the release of the documentary. (It's also

available for \$24.95 at legendsofthepalouse.com.)

Gesser is all over the place these days. He's offensive coordinator for the unbeaten Franklin Pierce High School Cardinals. He's playing for the Utah Blaze of the Arena Football League – training camp starts in February. He's living in Puyallup and a dad to two kids now – Jordyn, 4, and Kolten, 5 months. And he's a Northwest college football studio analyst for FSN.

His wife told him he was surprisingly good after his first show.

"I'm having a blast doing it. I go out there, say what I want to say and be who I am," said Gesser, who has a degree in communication. "You think you've got to be impartial, and that's the hard part, me being a homer for WSU. Every time they talk Cougs, they want me

to talk. But we're getting our butts beat. I don't want to talk about that. And I've never watched so many Husky games in my life. Normally I couldn't care less."

In the past Gesser has indicated he wants to be the head coach at Washington State someday. He was more specific recently, stating on an FSN broadcast that he hoped to lead the Cougs by the time he's 45, or 17 years from now.

He wants to raise his kids in Pullman and thinks he would do a great job, saying: "I think I'm a better coach than I was a player, and I thought I was an all-right player. I have a huge passion for it, almost more than playing."

(On Monday, Cougfan.com will post a story with Keith Jackson, Jim Walden, Jack Thompson and others offering advice to Gesser to help him achieve his dream.)

Contrary to what oddsmakers think, Gesser said: "We're going to beat UCLA because UCLA's not a good football team. (Alex) Brink's going to have a huge day. He's going to throw for five touchdowns. UCLA's secondary is horrible."

Never mind that UCLA is unbeaten in Pac-10 play, fifth in the league in pass defense, so not exactly horrible, and that WSU's not a good football team either – if a legend of the Palouse is talking, I'm listening.



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