



Naseby Rhinehart

MTATA Hall of Fame



Naseby “Doc” Rhinehart. Missoula Montana. The University of Montana and Grizzly athletics. You can lump them all together, because they are one in the same. Nase, as he is affectionately called by administrators, coaches, athletes, and Montanans has been at UM since 1931. He recently announced this season will be his last year at the school. (He also made that statement last year, only to celebrate his 70th birthday in his office, across from the UM training room.)

Born May 6, 1911 to Wesley and Crawford Rhinehart on a plantation in Georgia, Naseby and his parents, two brothers and six sisters moved to Milwaukee when he was four years old.

It was in Milwaukee that he learned his athletic skills and would later bring those wares to the collegiate level and UM.

His Lincoln High School football team won city titles in 1928 and 1929 and in 1928 he was named an all-city end – the first black to ever receive the honor. He also won the state discus title as a senior. The rest is history.

The beloved athletic trainer first heard about Missoula and its University from a black lawyer, Jim Dorsey, who was born and raised here, and who received his law degree at UM.

“Jim loved Missoula, but there just wasn’t any place to practice law, so he moved to where the jobs were,” Naseby reflected. “He and his wife had no children, and we really hit it off. He told me that he was going to send me out to Missoula to go to school here. Of course, I never really believed him.” Rhinehart said he had several offers from schools to play football, and he decided to attend Northwestern. However, he said, they were having problems in their athletic department, so they told him to sit out a year and it would all blow over. He did, but things didn’t get any better. “So I decided to give UM a try,” he said. Things didn’t exactly start out rosy for him in Missoula. “The coach (Bernie Oakes) met me at the train (1,500 miles from Milwaukee) and told me ‘I thought you’d be bigger.’ Well, I told him I had a return ticket and I could just get and go back home. I remember that day, it was September 13, 1931.”

“I looked around, and it was real quiet and I wasn’t too sure about being therein the first place,” he continued. “But the coach said that I took him wrong so I decided to stay.” After a year of freshman football (he was one of only two blacks at UM, and the only athlete) he was

ready for the varsity team. "I made up my mind I was going to be the left end, no matter who was ahead of me," he said. "I was confident."

After splitting duties as a sophomore the 6-0', 183-pounder became a fixture at left end for the Grizzlies. He was an honorable mention All-American pick as a senior in 1935, and was later named a member of the All-Time Grizzly Football Team at end.

Another thing that brought him to UM was basketball. "I loved basketball, and at that time the Big Ten didn't allow blacks to play, so I ruled them out quick. I couldn't shoot, but I played defense and covered 'the good cats' and hit the boards." A two-year starter, Naseby played guard and also jumped center. In track he had bests of 23 feet in the long jump and 140 feet in the discus. The highlight of his career came in 1935, when the winner of nine varsity letters was awarded the Grizzly Cup, given to the school's outstanding overall student-athlete. (An award his son, Naseby, Jr.' Pete' won in 1958). Less than a month after his graduation football coach Doug Fessenden asked him if he was interested in becoming the UM trainer.

"It was the turning point in my life," reflected the nationally recognized trainer, "I was thinking about going back to Milwaukee and becoming a policeman, but loved athletics so I decided to take the job." Being a trainer was a great challenge, and still is," he said. "Plus it's a hell of a lot of fun," he added with his famous, charismatic smile. "You might be down Saturday night, but Monday you've got to be ready to go. It hurts to lose. It hurts the kids. It hurts me and the coaches. We live together, and we win and die together." Not only did Naseby make outstanding contributions as an athlete, but he also did in the classroom.

He was one of the first trainers in the nation to develop an athletic training curriculum (1971) at a university. Many of his former UM students now have jobs at universities and high schools throughout the nation. He hasn't gone unrecognized for his efforts. Most recently he was named trainer to the Pan American Games in Puerto Rico in the summer of 1979. In 1974 he was awarded the UM Distinguished Service Award. He was selected as a trainer for the 1972 Olympic track teams. And in 1967 he was chosen as a member of the Helms Hall of Fame for athletic trainers. Naseby said other than improved size, speed, nutrition, weight training ("I've never lifted weights in my life") and medical training, athletes have not changed much in the last 50 years.

"We wanted to win," he said. All of us wanted to win real, real bad. We had a lot of desire, and the athletes today do too. Athletes have a lot of pride. You have to want to be the best. Like I said earlier about making up my mind to start at the left end – that's pride."

Pride is one word synonymous with Naseby Rhinehart. No matter who you talk to, you know they are PROUD to know this gentle man. Naseby and his wife Evelyn have four children. Pete, Sid, Vodie Ann and Penny.