James Pat Evans, MD, 1930–2019

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ABSTRACT

This biographical sketch of Dr. J. Pat Evans commemorates the life and contributions of one of the most influential sports surgeons in the history of orthopedic surgery, drawing on articles written in remembrance of him and his contributions to orthopedic surgery and sports medicine.

KEYWORDS Arthroscopy; orthopedics; remembrance; sports medicine

Dr. J. Pat Evans was born on August 5, 1930, and was raised in Dallas, Texas. As a devoted Christian youth, Evans spent many summers at a Young Life Camp in Colorado.¹ An avid outdoorsman and athlete, he attended Whitworth University in Washington on a football scholarship. During his time at Whitworth University, Evans suffered a knee injury that kept him sidelined during the season. He ultimately became the team's student athletic trainer and helped injured athletes recover and return to their respective sports. Upon graduation, Evans attended the Grady Vaughn School of Physical Therapy at Baylor University Medical Center to continue his passion for treating athletes.¹

He began practicing as a physical therapist within the Department of Orthopedics at Baylor University Medical Center and became very successful and proficient. The head of the orthopedics department encouraged Evans to attend medical school, and he ultimately enrolled at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in 1959.²

CAREER

Following his graduation from The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, Evans completed an internship and residency at Baylor University Medical Center and was then offered a full-time position. Evans stayed true to his original passion and was one of the first surgeons in the country to focus solely on sports medicine. A pioneer in sports surgery, he fought to have sports medicine a recognized subspecialty by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.^{1,2} He served as team physician for the Dallas

Cowboys from 1970 to 1989 and for the Dallas Mavericks from 1980 to 1992 (*Figure 1*).^{1,2} In addition to being an active sports surgeon in the Dallas community, Dr. J. Pat Evans published routinely in sports medicine journals. His articles covered topics such as stress fractures of the fifth metatarsal, bilaterality in anterior cruciate ligament injuries, and cryotherapy and nerve injuries.^{3–5}

After many years of serving professional athletes, Evans recognized a growing need for orthopedic care for rodeo cowboys—athletes who strived to participate regardless of their severity of injury. He worked with a sponsor, the Justin Boot Corporation, to assist with the medical care of rodeo cowboys around the country. Over time, Evans was at almost every rodeo in the West and treated cowboys free of charge, regardless of their injury.^{1,2} This organization was formalized in 1980 and became known as the Justin Sportsmedicine Team, which continues to be active today. By the time Evans retired in 2000, the Justin Sportsmedicine Team had contributed immensely to the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, attending 3300 rodeos and 13,000 rodeo performances; treating over 135,000 athletic injuries; providing \$28 million of free medical care to the cowboys; and traveling 2.7 million miles in the process of caring for these athletes (*Figure 2*).^{1,2}

Evans practiced at Baylor University Medical Center for over 30 years and was instrumental in establishing and promoting Baylor's Tom Landry Sports Medicine and Research Center. Since its opening in 1990, the Tom Landry Center has been nationally recognized as one of the premier sports medicine facilities in the world.

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Figure 1. Dr. James Pat Evans.

Figure 2. Commemorative image by Justin Sportsmedicine Team thanking Dr. J. Pat Evans for his continued service and treatment of cowboy athletes.

HONORS/AWARDS

Dr. J. Pat Evans accumulated many awards and honors throughout his long and fruitful career. He was inducted into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame in 2002 and the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame in 2004. In 2006 he established the J. Pat Evans Foundation to advance research and treatment of

Figure 3. Dr. J. Pat Evans later in his orthopedic career.

rodeo athletes. In 2018, he received the Jim Shoulders Lifetime Achievement Award from the Professional Bull Riders Association. Evans was also a Lane Frost Award recipient, a Resistol Man of the Year recipient, and an honorary member of the Herodicus Society (Figure 3). His legacy continues within the orthopedic community, as he is routinely recognized as a true pioneer and “father of sports medicine.”^{1,2}

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Dr. J. Pat Evans passed away peacefully at his home in Dallas, Texas, on July 22, 2019. We would like to thank Dr. Evans’ family for their recommendations and assistance with the development of this manuscript.

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