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Columbia native inducted into state's hall of fame

Russ Sloan played for three coaches at MU before coaching Northeast Missouri State

By **LYLE WHITWORTH**

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Not many college football players can say they played for three NCAA Hall of Fame coaches. So it's not surprising that Russ Sloan says former Missouri coaches Don Faurot, Frank Broyles and Dan Devine made a lasting impact.

Sloan, a Columbia native and Hickman High School graduate who went on to become a receiver for the Tigers, says these coaches were his motivation to pursue coaching, and he credits them for his own success.

Sloan, who played for Faurot's last Missouri team in 1956, Broyles' 1957 squad and Devine's first two teams in 1958 and 1959, was inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame last month for his work as head at coach Northeast Missouri State, now Truman State.

"I had phenomenal coaches, and, in a way, you'd like to think some of that rubbed off," Sloan said. "They were phenomenal inspirations. Whatever success that I achieved, I owe largely to the coaches that I had and certainly to the players that played for me."

Sloan led the Bulldogs to consecutive Missouri Intercollegiate Athletic Association championships from 1969 to 1971, despite predictions each season his teams would finish low in the standings. By the time he left after the '71 season, Sloan had compiled a 22-5-1 record. Before coming to Northeast Missouri State, Sloan excelled as a high school coach in Carthage.

Still, at the Feb. 11 induction ceremonies in Springfield, Mo., one of the things Sloan recalled first about about his time in football was Missouri's 1960 Orange Bowl team. That might have been because of fellow inductee Curtis McClinton, a former Kansas running back. Sloan recalled playing against him in the final regular season game in 1959. The winner advanced to play in the Orange Bowl in January.

The Tigers prevailed, 13-9, against Kansas, but lost, 14-0, in the Orange Bowl to Fran Tarkenton-led Georgia. Sloan, who led the Tigers in receiving in 1959 with 13 catches for 128 yards and three touchdowns, had six catches for 73 yards in the Orange Bowl. Tarkenton, who went on to star in the NFL for the Minnesota Vikings for many years, passed for both Georgia touchdowns against Missouri.

After leaving Kansas, McClinton went on to play several NFL seasons with the Kansas City Chiefs, playing on both their Super Bowl teams. His career rushing total is the sixth-best for the Chiefs.

The other inductees, 14 in all, who included former Cardinals pitcher Bruce Sutter, Cardinals General Manager Walt Jocketty and former Missouri baseball coach Gene McArtor, weren't what impressed Sloan the most about the ceremony.

Sloan said that 40 of his former players were among the almost 1,600 people who attended the ceremony.

"While the recognition was for the great successes I had at Northeast Missouri State," Sloan said, "I really look at it recognizing the three championship teams. They were just a remarkable group of young men.

"They are probably the tightest group of players in the entire state of Missouri in the last 40 years."

Sloan is only the second Hickman graduate to be inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame. Bob Vanatta, who coached the Missouri basketball team before Norm Stewart took over the program is the other former Kewpie in the Missouri hall.

Overall, however, it's hard to overlook Sloan's unique situation as a player at Missouri. He took full advantage of the the string of coaches that guided his teams.

"From a playing standpoint," Sloan said, "it probably will never ever happen to any other player again."

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