

# **El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame**

## **Joe Muench**

### **Media/Supporter of Athletics Nominee**





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- For more than 40 years, Joe Muench was a sports editor and columnist in Las Cruces and El Paso. During his career with the Las Cruces Sun News, El Paso Herald Post, and El Paso Times, his no-nonsense style of writing earned him numerous state and national awards. He also spent 20 years as a regular Monday contributor on KROD AM's SportsTalk.
- Joe covered a pair of Super Bowls, several NCAA Tournament basketball games, and every Sun Bowl game from 1985 until 2009. His first major assignment was the 1967 Final Four with New Mexico State.



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## Joe Muench

### Journalism Experience

- 2009 – 2013 Editorial department at El Paso Times
- Oct 1997 – 2009 Sports Columnist at El Paso Times
- July 1985 – Oct 1997 Sports editor/columnist at El Paso Herald Post
- Feb 1971 – July 1985 Sports editor/columnist at Las Cruces Sun News

### Professional Training

- American Press Institute, April 1989.
- Several management courses and seminars provided by Scripps Howard



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## Joe Muench

### **National Professional Awards**

First Place Associated Press Sports Editors “Column Writers” in circulation less than 50,000 in 1988.

Top 10 finalist for AP Sports Editor “Best Column Writing” in circulation less than 50,000 in 1989.

### **State Professional Awards**

First place Texas Associated Press Managing Editors “Sports Column” in 1998 and 1999.

First place Texas Associated Press Managing Editors “Spot News” in 1993.

New Mexico Sportswriter of the Year by the National Sports Writers and Sportscasters Association in 1974.



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## Joe Muench

### **Professional Experience**

Covered the majority of home and away games for NMSU from 1970 through 1985 and then home games for UTEP from 1985 through 2009.

Covered Super Bowls XXII and XXIII.

Covered NCAA Tournament games in 1987, 1975, 1970, and 1967.

Helped organize the NCAA Midwest Region in Las Cruces in 1975.

**To whom it may concern,**

The contributions to Borderland sports journalism by former El Paso Herald Post sports editor Joe Muench, who also served as a longtime sports columnist for the El Paso Times, are extensive and continue to have an impact.

For decades, Joe's entertaining and informative sports columns in both the El Paso Herald Post and the El Paso Times were among the most anticipated reads in the region. Through the paper's demise in October of 1997, Joe's Saturday columns appeared on the back page of the much-heralded and now missed former El Paso Herald Post tab Sports section, sparking much discussion and interest in UTEP and NMSU sports with his opinions and coverage that is greatly lacking in today's coverage of the schools. After the Herald Post's closure, Joe was quickly hired as a columnist for the El Paso Times Sports section, writing three columns a week including his most-anticipated Sunday columns, which became the anchor for the weekend sports page.

While Joe's column writing skills, humor and willingness to say (in radio appearances) and write what many wouldn't led to a better understanding of the unique world of Borderland sports, it was the impact he had on other journalists, like myself, that is perhaps his greatest contribution and what makes him most worthy of induction into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame. After my own 35 years in local sports television, newspapers and radio, I still consider Joe to be the biggest influence by far on my career and I am not alone.

As an 18 year-old college student in 1986, Joe gave me my first job in the business as an agate page clerk, typing in high school football box scores on Friday nights. Eager to learn and do more, Joe turned me loose covering the biggest high school football game of the week, getting my first bylines.

Soon I was given the El Paso Diablos minor league baseball beat, where Joe taught me on a daily basis what it took to be a great beat writer. His positive feedback and guidance helped me become one of the best scoop sports reporters ever in the Borderland, breaking stories on almost a daily basis and beating the competition.

During the late 1980s and through 1997, Joe's leadership made the afternoon newspaper sports section a must-read for the serious local sports fan. If you only read the Times during this period, you were missing out on daily scoops and information you couldn't get anywhere else in El Paso. Because of Joe's tutelage and the reputation I earned as a tell-it-like-it-is reporter, I was quickly hired as UTEP beat writer by the El Paso Times after the Herald Post's demise.

Teaming up with Joe again at the Times in the late 1990's, we quickly became the featured one-two punch with my daily scoops and his entertaining opinions giving readers perspective on the local sports world from all angles. Even when I left the newspaper business for television in early 2006, I found myself using the lessons on a daily basis that had been taught to me by Joe over the previous two decades.

Perhaps the most-missed item in today's El Paso sports coverage is a Joe Muench column. No one captured the uniqueness of a Don Haskins and Lou Henson like Joe. His written word is greatly missed in the Borderland. But the lessons he taught many others about competing and surviving in the business, live on to this day and beyond. When discussing sports media in our region for nearly the past half century, in my opinion Joe Muench is a name that belongs among all of the great media member Hall of Famers.

**Darren Hunt**



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is George Willis, Sports Columnist for the New York Post and it's my absolute pleasure to write a letter of recommendation for the induction of Joe Muench into the EL Paso Athletic Hall of Fame.

To me it's a no brainer, and not just because of his 50-plus years as a sports journalist. Joe has been a mentor to me since before I learned to type. I'm entering my 37<sup>th</sup> year as a sports journalist, my 23<sup>rd</sup> as a columnist for the New York Post with previous stops at New York Newsday and the New York Times. I can honestly say, I might not be where I am today if it wasn't for Joe.

For starters, Joe was one of my basketball coaches when I was in sixth grade at Central Elementary in Las Cruces, New Mexico. That's when I first learned to love sports, listen to my coaches and compete in a respectful manner. (By the way we won the city championship that year going unbeaten, 11-0.)

In addition, the Las Cruces Sun-News, where he served as the Sports Editor, was located across the street and after practice Joe would take us 11-year-olds to the newspaper so we could drink water and raid the soda machine. It was there I became fascinated with the pictures and words that were produced on the sports pages from games that involved not only the area schools but other major sporting events across the country.

Joe nurtured that interest when I graduated from Mayfield High School, offering me a position on the Sun-News sports staff when this 18-year-old had zero experience. I also had an offer to play college football at Western New Mexico, but elected to stay in Las Cruces and work for Joe as I wanted a long-term career in sports journalism. It's a decision I've never regretted.

I gained invaluable experience working for Joe my freshman and sophomore years at NMSU, editing copy, laying out pages, writing headlines, sizing pictures, covering high school and college sports, as well as boxing. Joe sent me on my first ever airplane ride to cover New Mexico State playing against Larry Bird's Indiana State team in Terre Haute, Ind. When I graduated NMSU and received a 3-month tryout at The Commercial Appeal in Memphis, Tenn., I knew what to do because I already had done it all working for Joe at the Sun-News. The summer tryout turned into a full-time job for four years in Memphis before moving on to New York.

I wasn't the only one Joe helped mentor. I'm sure along with his tenure in El Paso his "coaching" tree extends throughout the country. Joe has always set an example of what a columnist should be: tough, fair, and critical when need be. The thing I know about Joe is he has always cared about his job and understood the words he wrote had impact. He has never shied away from his basic responsibility to bring readers his truth. I followed his work in El Paso and saw the same brutally honest style that has always been his trademark.

There has been no bigger voice in sports in the El Paso/Las Cruces area than Joe Muench. From the words he has written to the lives he has impacted, he is more than worthy for induction into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame. It's a no brainer.

Thank you for your consideration,

George Willis

**February 20, 2023**  
**El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame**  
**Mr. Scott Stein, President**  
**El Paso, Texas**

**Dear Mr. Stein and El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame Committee:**

This letter is in reference to the nomination of Mr. Joe Muench for the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame in the Media/Supporter of Athletics Category.

One of the most inspiring, articulate and motivating columnists in the history of El Paso Sports is one Joe Muench. His insight into sports always makes one wonder of their own perspective of their favorite or not so favorite collegiate or professional sports team or athlete.

The El Paso Herald Post was the afternoon daily newspaper for El Paso, Texas since 1881 until it ceased publication in 1997. Joe Muench served as sports editor for a number of those later years at the Herald Post and later on as well at the El Paso Times. Mr. Muench oversaw a staff that focused on a marked increase in coverage of high school, college and professional sports while devoting more interest in female sports.

One area in particular that Mr. Muench excelled at during his tenure as sports editor was the art of the written column. His columns provided a different, yet creative and humorous analysis of sports from the perspective of the average everyday fan. His sports ideals opened the door to an explosion of ideas and opinions from sports fans from different ages and all walks of life that now had a voice through the columns of Joe Muench.

The journalistic skills of Mr. Muench enabled his hundreds of columns make us all stop and think. All the while he was also a leader of a staff of journalistic professionals that made his sports editor stewardship at the El Paso Herald Post and later the El Paso Times make both newspapers a must-read for years with their accent on UTEP Sports.

During my tenure with the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Department, through the efforts of Mr. Muench, he enabled many of our programs to be front and enter with his support of youth sports as well.

Mr. Joe Muench is a gifted writer and columnist and his years of being a sports editor also showcased his leadership skills and is a person that should be given strong consideration for induction into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame.

**Sincerely Yours,**  
**Wayne Thornton**  
**El Paso Parks and Recreation Department (Retired)**