

Joe  
Heiling



■ PRESS ROW

## TV series provides insight into 'Lone Stars'

Everything is bigger in Texas, right? Including the athletes of the state.

One independent sports programmer thinks so, marketing a series by Raycom labeled "Lone Stars" that features in-depth interviews with players such as Nolan Ryan, David Robinson, Troy Aikman and Warren Moon, but which struck out with Bruce Lietzke.

The first of the series -- three one-hour shows -- debuts Saturday on KFDM-Channel 6 at 12:30 p.m. and it should prove popular viewing.

Producers of the program wanted Lietzke, who grew up on the Beaumont links, as part of the Texans on the PGA Tour portion of the series. He politely declined, but they landed winners in Tom Kite and Ben Crenshaw.

"We were doing the filming while the tour was at the Byron Nelson and Colonial tournaments recently," says executive producer Robert Steinfeld. "We wanted to bring him on, but he just didn't want to do it."

What "Lone Stars" offers are strong insights into all these varied sporting personalities; the issues that drive them to excel, their moral values and goals in life outside of sports.

Ryan, the future Hall of Fame pitcher, if he ever retires, draws heavy interest everywhere, not just in Texas.

The interviews, with Dave Barnett as host, bring out the interests of Ryan and the others; not just offer a flashback of their big sports moments.

"Ryan gets emotional talking about his wife Ruth and how she raised the children while he was on the road," says Steinfeld. Because he is in banking and ranching, he talks of the presidential race. He doesn't know if anyone can be successful until Congress changes and wants to work with the president. So it doesn't really matter who steps up there."

Barnett, play-by-play announcer of the San Antonio Spurs basketball games, responds by saying, "You kind of sound like you're a Ross Perot man."

Ryan doesn't commit his vote, but he laughs and replies: "I believe in a lot of things he says."

This is the tone of the show. It's not just all sports, but about people who perform in the public arena. The 7-foot Robinson discusses morals, ethics, being a role model and his responsibility for his actions on and off the basketball court. Moon mentions future political ambitions on the August show.

The producer filmed Aikman's interview at the Dallas Cowboys quarterback's home just off the 16th fairway at Hackberry Creek Country Club in Irving, some five minutes away from the National Football League team's Valley Ranch headquarters.

At the architect's suggestion, Aikman's swimming pool is built with little Cowboys stars with his number 8 in it.

The two-story house probably covers more than 5,000 feet of living space and includes a trophy room, where the Davey O'Brien Award is displayed prominently. Another room centers on football helmets of all his teams, the Cowboys, UCLA, the Oklahoma Sooners and Henrietta, Okla., High School. One wall is covered with framed photos.

"It's like walking through a sports Hall of Fame museum," says Steinfeld. "The house is unbelievable."

More interesting is Aikman discussing his football injuries and how thoughts of his father enable him to handle the game's punishments that sideline him from time to time.

"His dad worked in the oil fields with piping," says Steinfeld, "and he once sawed his finger off. They had to put it back together. So Troy figures every time he gets knocked down or his head strung out, he thinks about his dad and can deal with whatever injury he's got."

Joe Heiling is sports editor of the Beaumont Enterprise.