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## Newhouse to Speak at LLLC

By Lou Fancher

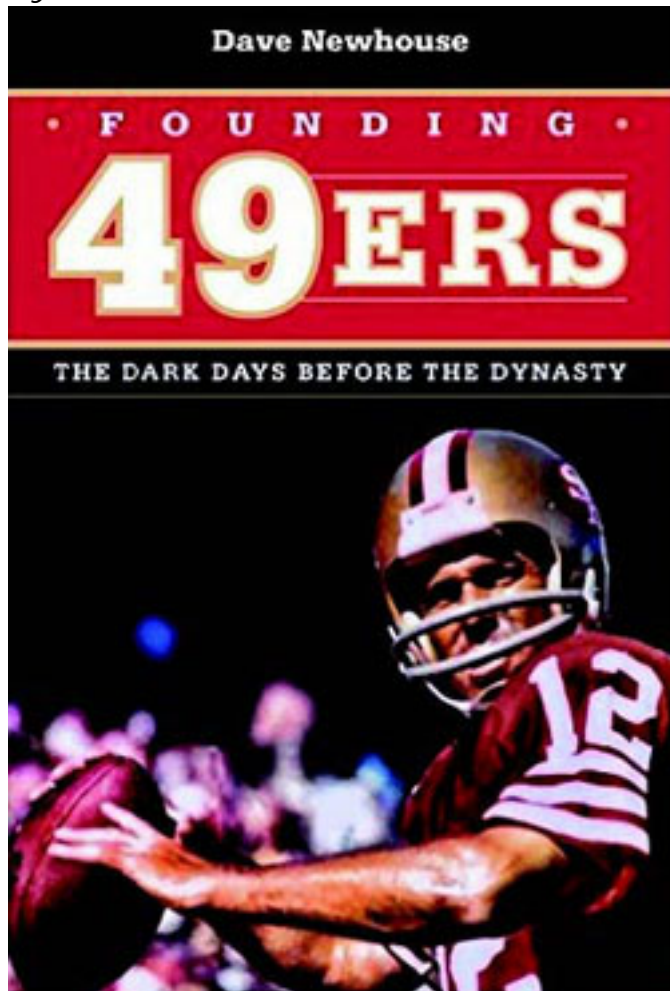


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as 'Textbook Tackle' due to his intelligent playing will join Newhouse. "I'll read part of the chapter I've written about him, then talk with him about the days when the 49ers were not a dynasty. The years when they didn't win league or conference championships."

Newhouse is likely to lay the groundwork by reading from his book about the years during World War II, when future 49er players were being hit by shrapnel, not defensive tackles. "These guys, some of them, came out of WW II and were genuine heroes," Newhouse says.

But they weren't on television or the instant heroes or villains created by today's tweeting and blogging, he insists. "Even when they got on TV, most people didn't have televisions. The games were on radio. There weren't a lot of competing sports here so those players became heroes, not because there was a viral, instant-celebrity society, but because they were pioneers."

Peculiar pioneers - with quirky habits, volatile relationships, second jobs (early players didn't command eye-popping salaries), unusual playing styles and other surprises Newhouse weaves into a compelling, team-coming-of-age-style narrative.

Response to the book has been positive, with groups like the NFL's Northern California Alumni Chapter purchasing 400 copies to distribute and guest stints on KGO Radio and Michael Krasny's Forum on NPR. "People say I hit a gold strike," Newhouse says. "One of the common expressions is, 'I didn't know this, or that.' Part of 49er history is either forgotten or untapped. It's like a black

Dave Newhouse is a sucker for beginnings.

Toss the longtime sportswriter and author the true story of a college basketball team improbably started at a just-made-coed school that swiftly won major championships or a historic tale of three seconds put back on a clock that turned upside down the dreams of an Olympic basketball team and the former Oakland Tribune columnist is hooked like a well-caught fish.

So it won't surprise his readership that the Lafayette Library's Distinguished Speaker Series Oct. 1 will introduce his new book, "Founding 49ers: The Dark Days Before the Dynasty." The book chronicles the slow slog - 35 years - and spirited characters that built the 49ers from a motley crew into the crown king championship franchise known today.

Newhouse, 77, retired after 47 years at the Oakland Tribune and a career that includes hosting a KNBR radio talk show in the 1980s, appearances in ESPN and COMCAST sports documentaries and more. Never a person to put down his writer's pen, his passion for crafting stories and sharing them with audiences remains unabated.

"The library asked if I wanted somebody from a radio station to moderate, but I've been in front of crowds so much I said I'd be OK on my own," Newhouse says.

Even so, he appreciates the value of having a buddy. If the health of former 49er defensive lineman Charlie Krueger holds up, the man known

hole."

The dangers of football, on the other hand, are all too familiar to Newhouse and most hot-for-sports Bay Area communities including Lamorinda. It's a subject that can shoot Newhouse into a riff of responses. "Pro football has gone from broken noses and knocked out teeth to serious concussion injuries that have caused players to commit suicide," he says. "Coaches don't legislate against going head-to-head. It's like concussion city."

Performance enhancing drugs are another bone to jaw on. "If you take a drug, you sit out four games. If you knock someone out, you might not even have a penalty. The NFL punishes more for drug users than head hunters who cause concussions." Newhouse says that as long as players unions can overturn a commissioner's decision - "Roger Goodell makes \$44 million a year and as we see with Deflate-gate, he doesn't seem to have a lot of power," Newhouse says - players are going to get richer and sicker. "The game seems to want to hurt itself," he says.

Despite his critical words, he is unlikely to stop wordsmithing about sports. Mining the resumes and histories of athletes to find the person in the player is his way of connecting to the world - and to his inner sensibilities. His next book, "Dare to Dream," written with former UC Berkeley coach Lou Campanelli, profiles the meteoric, 10-year rise of the James Madison University men's basketball team. A second, untitled book, this one in search of a publisher, captures the peaks and valleys of the 1972 Olympics, when swimmer Mark Spitz wowed the world, Eddie Hart's heart was broken when his coach misfired the start time for his heat and three seconds made all the difference to Russian and American competitors. "My writing MO is to try to present the sensitive sides of people," Newhouse says. We might add, "And it's only the beginning."

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