

Lucio Honors Coaching Career of Tony Villarreal III

Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio (D-Brownsville), authored Senate Resolution 359 which honors the career of Tony Villarreal III who was inducted into the RGV Sports Hall of Fame in 2018.

Villarreal III honored, still has coaching itch*

Throughout a 37-year football coaching career, Tony Villarreal III has experienced big games and racked up wins and championships.

Villarreal III also received multiple honors in that time, but his most recent recognition may be the one he values most after being honored by the Texas Senate on Thursday morning at the state capitol in Austin.

In Senate Resolution No. 359, which was read aloud by Texas Senator Eddie Lucio Sr., Villarreal III was recognized for his accomplished coaching career and induction to the Rio Grande Valley Sports Hall of Fame in 2018.

Hearing about the award was a pleasant surprise for the former coach, bringing him feelings he's rarely felt.

“As the ceremony got closer I began to get nervous, really nervous,” Villarreal said. “I have ice water in my veins, I don't get nervous, but I was nervous. I couldn't figure out why, but it was just the grandness of it all, walking in the state capitol and the Senate floor. These men are some of the most powerful men in the state of Texas. They are sitting here passing laws that are going to impact you and I tomorrow, and they are taking time out to recognize me? The guy with the whistle? It was just so much and it's probably one of the greatest honors that I've ever received.”

Villarreal III has had head coaching stints at Port Isabel, PSJA North, Hanna and Weslaco High, racking up 17 district championships (at least one with every program), 38 playoff wins a 197-107-4 record.

Also, he has had assistant coaching stops at McAllen High, Alice, PSJA High and Port Isabel from 1980 to 1989 before taking the helm for Port Isabel in 1990 and eventually leading the Tarpons to the state semifinal in 1994 after one of the most iconic seasons in RGV football history.

Villarreal III retired in 2016 after 11 seasons with Weslaco High, though he has not completely ridden off into the sunset just yet, hoping to make a return to the sidelines, which he is eligible to do in July of this year.

“I retired from the profession, but I’m eligible to get a full-time coaching job on July 1,” Villarreal III said. “Obviously there’s no coaching jobs available in July. We might have to wait until next January, and it’s a very small window from there to March, but I’m interested in coaching. But we’ll just see what happens. Hopefully, that’s an opportunity that comes along.”

Keeping the coaching itch alive for Villarreal III has been the leadership consulting he has done both on and off the field.

In 2017, Villarreal III was a football quality control consultant at La Joya High and since then has privately consulted and mentored several young coaches across the RGV.

“I try and help them with whatever situation they have,” Villarreal said. “I’m a big proponent of young people, and I really want the Valley to be super successful, whether it be athletics or academics.”

Villarreal III also does leadership consulting with his son, Anthony, who runs A.C. Villarreal Family Dental in Edinburg.

The former football coach said it’s a different venture, but he enjoys helping mold young professionals.

“I did a little bit of leadership consulting in La Joya, but now I’m doing the same thing with my son,” Villarreal III said. “It’s the same thing, just coaching a different profession, but with dental assistants, hygienists and other young professionals, showing how we can build a team and be successful. It’s a people game, you’re good at what you do. You can motivate, inspire and build a cohesive team, and that’s what we’re doing right now. We’ve really got a successful dental office, and I’m really proud of my son and my wife and all the people that work for us.”

* Molina, Mark. "Villarreal III honored, still has coaching itch." *Valley Morning Star*, 19 May 2019, <https://www.valleymorningstar.com/2019/05/19/villarreal-iii-honored-still-coaching-itch/>