

DONALD GRAY BRADDOCK



Donald Gray Braddock, 73, of Callahan, gained his heavenly wings April 5, 2022, after a lengthy illness.

Donnie was born on July 24, 1948, in Jacksonville to Donald Pasco (D.P.) and Claudine Braddock, just minutes before his identical twin brother Ronnie.

Donnie was a lifelong resident of Callahan and member of Callahan First Baptist Church. He graduated from Callahan High School in the Class of 1966. Donnie excelled in sports, lettering in football, baseball, basketball and track. After high school, Donnie continued his education on a football scholarship to Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, playing linebacker, feared by many opponents. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. Donnie made many lifelong friends at HSU, continuing to attend homecomings and other functions throughout the years. He was inducted into the Reddie Hall of Fame in 2006, along with his brother Ronnie.

Donnie will be remembered as a beloved high school teacher, coach and friend. After college, Donnie spent many years coaching and teaching in Nassau County, at West Nassau High School, Callahan Junior High and Fernandina Beach High School. He wore many hats as head coach, athletic director, and activities director at the schools. His love was in teaching and coaching, and he was an advocate for many students and players trying to navigate their next steps into adulthood and secondary education. Many local graduates from Nassau County continued their education at Henderson State University, and countless other universities, because of his love and knowledge of football and education and his desire to always help another succeed. Later, Donnie also taught and coached at University Christian School in Jacksonville, and was also an adjunct professor of Anatomy and Physiology at Jacksonville University.

Donnie's love of football was well known. He and his twin Ronnie were instrumental in organizing and continuing the "Old-timers" football games in Nassau County in the late 70's, where the east met the west side of the county for a healthy showdown of past players reliving their "Glory Days." He looked forward to the challenge each year, and was rightly feared and revered, even as the oldest player on the field. He was a fierce competitor. His love of the game made him many friends and the icon they all looked up to.

During this time, football led Donnie into another arena, the World Football League. He played semi-pro football for the Texarkana Titans, Chicago Fire, and eventually ended home in Nassau County playing linebacker for the Jacksonville Firebirds.

Donnie was also a pioneer in the women's semi-professional football league as owner and head coach of the Jacksonville Dixie Blues. He led them to national prominence, assisted by his nephew Bishop.

Along the way, Donnie's love for Biology led him to pursue a medical degree in 1987 from UTEPA University in the Dominican Republic. He made many friends from different areas of the nation, learned to communicate in Spanish and introduced the "real" game of American football to the friends he made in the Dominican.

Donnie loved his family and enjoyed spending time with his nephews and nieces whom he nicknamed the "Pilgrims." They, along with their friends, will certainly remember his antics and games, as he was a staple in all of their lives and always made life fun and interesting. His personality and sense of humor was one of a kind and will be missed by all.

Donnie will rejoice in heaven upon seeing his grandparents; parents; and brother, and will embrace in a long-awaited reunion.

He is survived by his brother Dale "Spug" (Carol) Braddock; sister-in-law Lissa Braddock; nephews: Ronald, Jr "Biggs" (Kadie), Bishop "Kilroy, Dr. Detroit" (Ashley); nieces: Erin "Baby Erin" (Joe) Gray, Lauren "Lollipop" (Shea) Fellows, Blake "Blakey Pooh" (Tucker) Jenkins and Natalie "Nattie Frog" (Bryan) Armstrong; and numerous great-nephews and nieces.

The family will receive friends Thursday, April 7 from 6-8 p.m. at Callahan First Baptist Church. The homegoing service will be Friday, April 8 at 12 p.m. also at the church. Donnie will be laid to rest in the family plot in Jones Cemetery in Callahan. Following, the family will receive friends at the home of Lissa Braddock in Callahan.