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49ers honor former owner Eddie DeBartolo Jr.

By AP Staff, San Francisco Chronicle

(09-20-2010) San Francisco (AP) – Former 49ers owner Eddie DeBartolo Jr. was honored as the inaugural inductee into San Francisco's Hall of Fame on Sunday.

DeBartolo owned the team from 1977-98, when the 49ers won five Super Bowls, and was affectionately known as "Mr. D" to his players and coaches.

Walking alongside several family members, DeBartolo was greeted with cheers of "Eddie, Eddie!" from the crowd at Candlestick Park during halftime of Sunday's game against Seattle.

A stage was set up at midfield where Jerry Rice spoke and a plaque was unveiled honoring DeBartolo as the first inductee into the Eddie DeBartolo Sr. Hall of Fame.

"Eddie has set a standard in the NFL that has never been matched," said Rice, one of a half-dozen former players taking part in the ceremony. "When you think of San Francisco, you think of the 49ers and of Eddie DeBartolo Jr.'s legacy. He demanded perfection and we delivered for him."

Among the players joining Rice at halftime were Hall of Famers Joe Montana and Ronnie Lott, and former 49ers stars Dwight Clark, Roger Craig and Eric Davis.

Steve Young, another Hall of Famer who played for DeBartolo's teams, delivered a video tribute that was played on the stadium scoreboard.

"This is probably the last time that I will ever have an opportunity to stand before the people that have made such an impact on my life," DeBartolo told the crowd in a brief speech. "You are not 49er faithful. You are my 49er family. From the bottom of my heart, to everybody who has been with us, fought with us and struggled with us during my ownership, I thank you."

The 62-year-old DeBartolo later told reporters he plans to help his nephew and current 49ers president Jed York in the team's efforts to land a new stadium deal.

"I told him I would help him with the stadium effort and do whatever I needed to do to help him," DeBartolo said. "Believe me, whether or not anybody wants to understand this, this is a family affair. I'm not involved in the ownership or management of the team but I will be actively involved to help him wherever he needs me."