

# State of Champions



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Mention the state of Oklahoma and many images come to mind. However, one word that is synonymous with the state is sports. Oklahomans love sports as well as their sports heroes. Oklahoma has a rich sports tradition. The state has produced individuals who excelled in traditional sports such as football, baseball, and gymnastics to more extreme style sports including rodeo and bicycle freestyle competition. The state boasts of Olympic medalists, Heisman Trophy winners, collegiate champions, and individuals who have succeeded in professional sports.

As I worked on this edition of the *Oklahoma Almanac*, one thing became apparent: sports can serve as a great equalizer, while pricking the conscience of a nation regarding more important issues. Tennis great Althea Gibson once said, “In the field of sports you are more or less accepted for what you do rather than what you are.” Yet, many athletes featured within these pages faced obstacles both on and off the playing field including gender and racial discrimination. In 1949 Earlene Risinger joined the ranks of approximately 600 other women who played professional baseball in the United States. While many in America scoffed at women in sports, Risinger and her colleagues proved that women could play team sports on a professional level with the same intensity and dedication as men. In 1956, at the height of racial segregation, Prentice Gautt broke racial barriers and became the first African American to play football at the University of Oklahoma. Gautt excelled on the playing field, and was named a two-time All-Big Eight player and the Orange Bowl Most Valuable Player in 1959. Following his collegiate football career, Gautt played professional football for the Cleveland Browns and the St. Louis Cardinals. He also earned a doctorate degree in psychology. As these individuals broke down societal barriers, they provided lessons in courage and perseverance as they paved the way for those athletes who would follow.

This volume features athletes who are winners not only in athletic competition, but more importantly, they are champions in life. Once their playing days ended, many continued to make a profoundly positive affect on the lives of individuals as well as in their local community, state, and nation. Although individuals such as Nadia Comaneci are not native to the state, they have become an integral part of Oklahoma and deserve to be recognized for their accomplishments. As you read about these incredible sports figures, I think you will realize as I did: Oklahoma truly is a “state of champions.”

Connie G. Armstrong, Editor 

# Oklahoma State of Champions

Acknowledged as one of the greatest all-around American athletes, Jim Thorpe was born near Prague, Oklahoma, on May 28, 1887. A Sac and Fox Indian, Thorpe played collegiate level sports at the Carlisle Indian Institute in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In addition to his accomplishments on the football field, he was a one-man track team and excelled in basketball, lacrosse, baseball, and all other sports he attempted. Thorpe won gold medals in the 1912 Olympic decathlon and pentathlon events and excelled in professional football and baseball.

Thorpe played professional football for the Canton Bulldogs, Cleveland Indians, Oorang Indians, Rock Island Independents, New York Giants, and the Chicago Cardinals. As a member of the American Football Association, he became the league's highest paid player with a weekly salary of \$250. In 1920 he became the first president of the American Football Association, now the National Football League. Thorpe also played baseball for twenty years. During his six years in the major league (1913-19), he accumulated a .252 batting average. He averaged .327 in his final season with the Boston Red Sox. He once hit three home runs into three different states in the same game. Playing on the border of Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, Thorpe hit a shot to left field into Oklahoma, right field into Arkansas, and over the center field wall into Texas. Thorpe died on March 28, 1953.

State of Champions **1**



**Jim Thorpe**

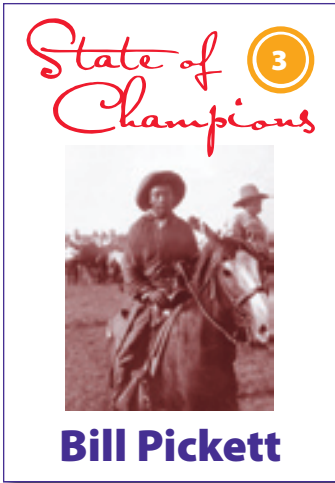
State of Champions **2**



**Lucille Mulhall**

Born in 1885, Lucille Mulhall grew up on her family's famous Mulhall Ranch, located fourteen miles north of Guthrie, Oklahoma, where they operated their wild west show and cattle business. She possessed a natural talent for roping as well as a gift of working with horses. At the age of thirteen, she competed in relay horse races and steer roping contests, demonstrated the art of the lasso, and performed tricks with her trained horse named Governor.

Although there were many female wild west show entertainers like Annie Oakley and May Lillie, Mulhall was the first woman to compete in riding and roping events right along with range hardened cowboys. As a result of her rodeo prowess, Will Rogers named her "America's First Cowgirl." Mulhall died on December 21, 1940, at the age of fifty-five.



Considered the most famous African American cowboy, Bill Pickett was born on December 5, 1870, in Austin, Texas. Pickett worked on the 101 Ranch in Oklahoma Territory, where he is credited for inventing “bulldogging,” now known as steer wrestling. His bulldogging technique included biting the steer on the lip. During the early 1900s, he joined the Miller Brothers Wild West Show, where he traveled throughout the world showcasing his rodeo skills for such dignitaries as England’s King George V and Queen Mary.

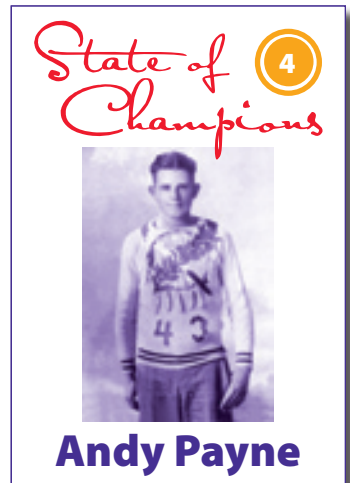
Pickett broke through the barriers of prejudice that surrounded him at the time and set a great example of courage, honesty, and hard work to all people. Following his tenure in wild west shows, Pickett worked as a cowhand on the 101 Ranch and competed in local rodeos. He also appeared in feature films, becoming the first black cowboy movie star. He died on April 2, 1932, following an injury he sustained when a wild horse kicked him in the head. In 1971 Pickett became the first African American inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. He has been inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame and Museum of the American Cowboy at Colorado Springs, Colorado.

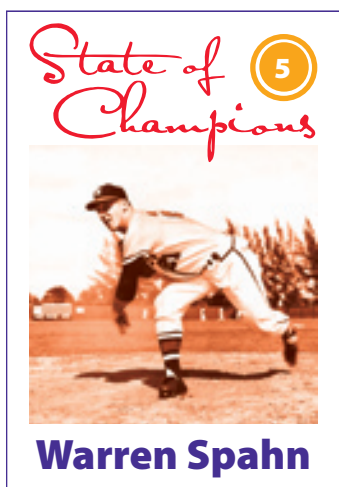
Born on a ranch near Chelsea, Oklahoma, on November 16, 1907, Andy Payne attended Foyil public schools and participated in high school track, competing in the mile and half-mile running events. Following his high school graduation, he traveled to Los Angeles, California, in hopes of finding employment. While in California, Payne read a newspaper announcement regarding C. C. Pyle’s International Transcontinental Foot Race. With the assistance of his father, Payne raised the \$128 entry fee, and at the age of twenty became one of six Americans to enter the race.

The 3,422.3-mile race, billed as the “Great Bunion Derby,” featured 275 runners from around the world. The race began on March 4, 1928, in Los Angeles and traversed through ten states including Flagstaff, Arizona, El Reno, Oklahoma, St. Louis, Missouri, and Chicago, Illinois, before concluding at Madison Square Garden in New York City. During the race, Payne developed tonsillitis from running in freezing rain. However, as Payne entered Oklahoma, he led the eighty runners, who remained in the race.

Payne averaged sixty miles a day, and on May 26, 1928, he completed the race in 573 hours, four minutes, and thirty-four seconds. He won the race, beating the nearest competitor by fifteen hours. The *New York Times* heralded Payne as the “Hoofing Kid from Claremore,” and he quickly became a national hero as news of the race spread across the country.

Payne took the \$25,000 first prize money and returned to Oklahoma. In 1934 he won election as clerk to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. At the age of forty, he graduated from Oklahoma City University Law School, and continued in his position as Supreme Court clerk until his retirement in 1973. Payne died in 1977. In 1998 he was inducted into the Oklahoma Long Distance Running Wall of Fame.





Although born in Buffalo, New York, on April 23, 1921, Warren Spahn was reared in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Spahn is the winningest left-handed pitcher in baseball history with 363 victories, all but seven wins coming with the Boston Braves and Milwaukee Braves. Spahn holds the National League's lifetime marks for innings pitched over his 21-year career, hurling two no-hitters and winning the 1957 Cy Young Award. He won twenty straight games on thirteen occasions, six years in a row, and led the National League in wins eight times. He was the mainstay for the Braves's pitching staff for two decades and led the NL in strikeouts for four consecutive years.

Spahn led the league in ERA in 1953. He failed to win twenty games only once between 1953 and 1961, as he began to master changing speeds and location to keep hitters off balance. In 1957, at the age of thirty-six, Spahn led the

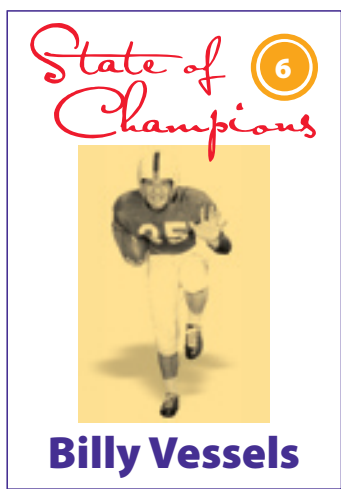
Braves to the pennant with a 21-11, 2.69 record and began a string of five consecutive seasons leading the NL in wins. In 1957 he led the Braves to win the World Series. In September 1960 he pitched the first no-hitter of his career against the Phillies. The following year, he pitched a no-hitter against the Giants, just five days before his fortieth birthday. That August, he beat the Cubs in a packed Milwaukee County Stadium for his 300th victory.

Despite slumping to 18-14 in 1962, Spahn led the NL in complete games, compiled a 3.04 ERA, and tied his career-best record with a 23-7 mark. During his distinguished career, he played for the Boston Braves, Milwaukee Braves, New York Mets, and San Francisco Giants. He retired from baseball at the age of forty-four. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973, his first year of eligibility. Spahn continues to hold the NL record for career home runs by a pitcher with thirty-five. He died November 24, 2003.

Billy Vessels was born in March of 1931, in Cleveland, Oklahoma. He played football at the public high school, where his speed earned him the nickname of the "Cleveland Comet." He also was a three time state champion in the low hurdles. In 1949 he entered the University of Oklahoma, and played football for the legendary coach Bud Wilkinson. As a Sooner, he was a two-time all conference selection who set school records for rushing yards, scoring, and all purpose yards in a single season.

In 1950 he led the first time national champions in rushing with 870 yards on 135 carries, pass receiving with 229 yards on eleven catches, and scoring with ninety points and fifteen touchdowns. In the 49-35 win over the Nebraska Cornhuskers he rushed for a single game Sooner record of 208 yards and three touchdowns.

In 1952 Vessels was named to the All Big-7 Conference Team, a Consensus All-American, Associated Press and United Press International Back of the Year, and the UPI Player of the Year. He also won the Heisman Trophy, college football's most prestigious award. In 1953 Vessels began his professional football career, playing for the Edmonton Eskimos and later the Baltimore Colts. In 1974 he was elected to the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame. He died on November 17, 2001.



**J**.W. Mashburn, a native of Oklahoma City, attended Capitol Hill High School lettering in football, basketball, and track at a time when Capitol Hill was one of the premier prep powers in the state. His athletic skills helped the Redskins win the 1949 football championship as well as back-to-back track state titles in 1950 and 1951. Mashburn collected gold medals in track in the 180-yard hurdles, 220-yard dash, and 440-yard dash. He also ran championship relay quartets in the 440, 880, and mile run.

Mashburn concentrated his track talents at Oklahoma State University (then Oklahoma A&M) and became a four-time All-American from 1952–56. While at OSU, Mashburn was the NCAA 400-meter champion in 1955 and again in 1956. His talent also led him overseas as a member of the U.S. Olympic track team where he helped bring home the gold medal in the 4X400 relay. A few days later, he ran a leg on the 1,600-meter relay team that set a world record during the British-USA meet in London, England. In 1955 he won the gold medal in the 4X400 again in the Pan American Games in Mexico City. Mashburn received the honor as the 1999 Oklahoma 400-Meter Runner of the Century.

State of **7**  
Champions



**J.W. Mashburn**

State of **8**  
Champions



**Mickey Mantle**

**D**orn on October 20, 1931, in Spavinaw, Oklahoma, Mickey Mantle began playing baseball as a little league shortstop and later at Commerce High School in Commerce, Oklahoma. After graduating from high school in 1949, the New York Yankees signed him for a reported \$1,100 bonus. Less than two years later, nineteen-year-old Mantle found himself playing right field for the Yankees, next to the great Joe DiMaggio in center field. A speedy switch-hitter, Mantle had a total of 536 regular-season home runs, and a lifetime batting average of .298. He was voted the league's Most Valuable Player in 1956. That year he won the Triple Crown, leading the league in batting average (.353), home runs (52), and runs batted in (130). In 1957 he hit a career-high (.365). In 1961 he and teammate Roger Maris both threatened Babe Ruth's single-season record of sixty home runs. Mantle, slowed by an injury, finished with fifty-four, while Maris hit sixty-one.

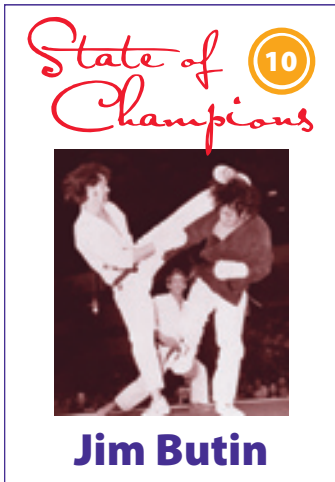
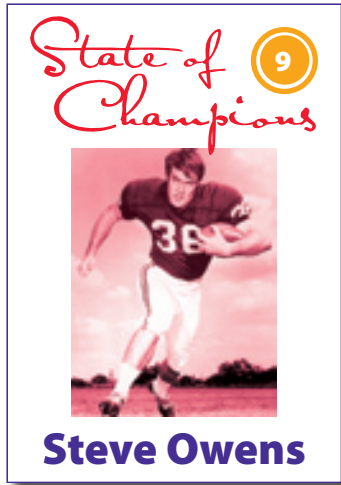
Considered the most feared hitter on the most successful team in history, Mantle led the American League in home runs four times. In the glare of the October spotlight, when an entire country was watching, Mantle's swing resulted in eighteen home runs in the World Series, a record that still stands. Two home runs deserve special mention. His 565-foot hit off Chuck Stobbs in 1953 was the first of the tape-measure homers. In 1956 he missed by eighteen inches from hitting the first ball out of Yankee Stadium, when his hit off Pedro Ramos struck the top of the right field upper-deck façade.

Mantle spent his entire career with the Yankees (1951–1969), leading the Yanks to twelve fall classics in fourteen years, and seven World Series Championships. He still owns records for most homers, RBI, runs, walks, and strikeouts in World Series play. He retired from professional baseball on March 1, 1969. He was inducted in the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, in 1974. He died on August 13, 1995.

**D**orn on December 9, 1947, in Gore, Oklahoma, Steve Owens was an outstanding high school football player and was named Oklahoma High School Football Player of the Year, High School All-American, and Oklahoma All-State football in 1965.

While playing football at the University of Oklahoma, Owens was selected to the All Big Eight Conference team in 1967, 1968, and 1969; received Big 8 Player of the Year honors in 1968 and 1969; and was a Consensus All American in 1968 and 1969. His teammates also selected him as co-captain of the 1969 Sooners. During his collegiate career, Owens gained 3,867 yards, in 905 carries, scoring fifty-six rushing touchdowns. He also gained more than one hundred yards in seventeen consecutive games. He finished his career at OU by winning the 1969 Heisman Trophy, an honor awarded to the nation's outstanding college football player.

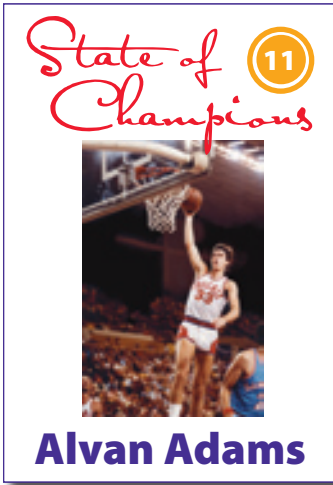
Owens began his professional football career in 1970, after being drafted in the first round by the Detroit Lions. The first Lion to gain over 1,000 yards in a season, he won All Pro honors in 1971. After six years with Detroit, he retired due to a serious knee injury. In 1991 Owens was inducted into the National Football Foundation College Hall of Fame, the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame, and was named the Walter Camp Foundation Alumnus of the Year. Owens was inducted into the Orange Bowl Hall of Honor in 1992.



**J**im Butin began his martial arts training, under the tutelage of J. Pat Burselson in 1965. Considered one of the most aggressive and successful tournament fighters of his day, Butin's Black Belt tournament career spanned from 1968 through 1992. He earned his first Dan Black Belt in June of 1968. He achieved over forty-five Black Belt championship titles including winning every championship in the Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Louisiana region. In 1972 he was rated the number one fighter in the tough southwest region by *Professional Karate Magazine*. An impressive honor considering two-thirds of the nation's top ten rated fighters were in the southwest at the time.

Four National Black Belt titles belong to Butin as well as a silver medal from the first World Tae Kwon Do Championships held in Seoul, Korea, in 1973. He served as a member of the undefeated American team in European competition in 1974. Moreover, he was the second ranked light heavyweight kickboxer in the world in the Professional Karate Association from 1974-78. He is listed in Bob Wall's *Who's Who of Martial Artists*, and was inducted into the Martial Arts Hall of Fame in Akron, Ohio, in 1991. The National Black Belt League also honored him with a place in their Martial Arts Hall of Fame in 1997.

Butin moved to Oklahoma City, where he established and continues to operate a very successful karate school. He also founded and served as director of the Oklahoma Karate Association from 1985-88. Butin is currently a 9th Dan Black Belt.



Known as the “Oklahoma Kid” and “Double A,” Alvan Adams was an All-American basketball player from Putnam City High School. He played collegiate basketball at the University of Oklahoma, where he proceeded to set a number of new records such as most points in a game (43), the most rebounds in a game (28), the highest single season scoring average of 26.5 as a junior, and the highest single rebounding average of 13.3 as a junior. Adams also set Sooner records of 1,707 points and 938 rebounds. He was the only unanimous selection on the Big Eight Conference 1970s All-Decade Team. He was named both the Big Eight Player of the Year and MVP of the Big Eight Tournament three times. He carried a 3.8 grade point average in pre-medicine while at OU and was on the Dean’s Honor List. He was selected the fourth overall pick in the first round of the 1975 NBA draft by the Phoenix Suns.

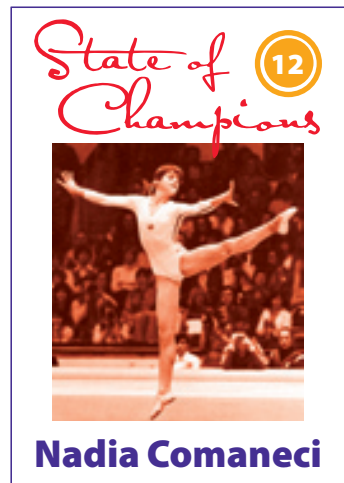
During thirteen pro seasons with the Suns, Adams scored a total of 13,910 points. He was named “Rookie-of-the-Year” in 1976 and was the only rookie selected to the 1976 NBA All-Star Game. He ranks first on the Suns all time list in rebounds (6,937), 4,012 assists, 1,289 steals, and 988 games played. He averaged 14.1 points and seven rebounds per game with a .788 percentage from the free throw line. He averaged 4.1 assists per game and ranked third behind Wilt Chamberlain’s 4.4 and Bill Russell’s 4.3. He was instrumental in the Suns winning their first Western Conference title and their participation in the 1976 championship. He led all scorers in the 1976 championship finals against the Boston Celtics with 138 total points and single game high of thirty-three. Adams is one of six players inducted into the Phoenix Suns Ring of Honor.

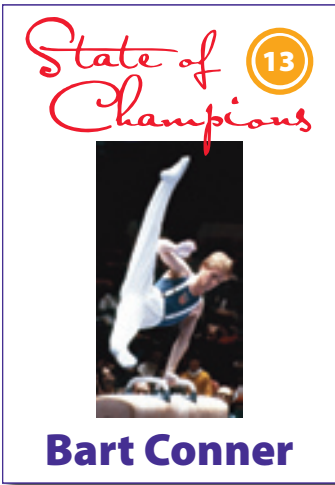
Romania native Nadia Comaneci was the star of the Montreal Olympics in 1976 when she achieved in her sport what no Olympian, male or female, ever had before: perfection. Her perfect score of 10.0 on the uneven bars in the compulsories round was only the beginning as she went on to post six more perfect scores. In the most spectacular display of women’s gymnastics, Comaneci left Montreal with three gold medals in the uneven bars, balance beam, and all-around; one team silver medal; and one bronze in the floor exercise.

Comaneci first came to prominence at the 1975 European Championships, where she won four gold medals. In the 1976 and 1980 Olympic competition, she won a total of nine medals. In addition, she is the only woman to win the European AA title three times. Her last major competition was the World University Games in Bucharest in 1981. She retired in 1984, just weeks before the Los Angeles Olympics.

Later she became an international judge and coach for the Romanian National Team.

In 1989 she defected to the United States and began a career as a model. While visiting Norman, Oklahoma, she became reacquainted with U.S. gymnast Bart Conner, a two-time gold medal winner at the 1984 Olympics. Both she and Conner were the winners of the very first American Cup competition in 1976. In 1996 she married Conner in her native Romania. In 2000 she was named one of the “Athletes of the Century” at the World Sports Awards in Vienna, Austria. She now lives in Norman.





**B**art Conner came to Oklahoma in 1976 from Maywood, Illinois. A product of the University of Oklahoma gymnastic program, he is the most accomplished gymnast America has ever produced and the only American gymnast, male or female, to win gold medals at every level of competition. He is a junior national champion, an elite national champion, a Pan American Games champion, a World Cup champion, a world champion, and Olympic champion.

Conner's gymnastic accomplishments include: 1972, AAU Junior National champion; 1974, USGF Junior National champion; 1975, USGF co-champion of the USA; Elite Division All-Around, and Pan American Games champion Team; 1976, First American Cup champion, and the youngest member of the U.S. Men's Olympic Team; 1978, NCAA All-Around champion; 1979, USA champion; Elite

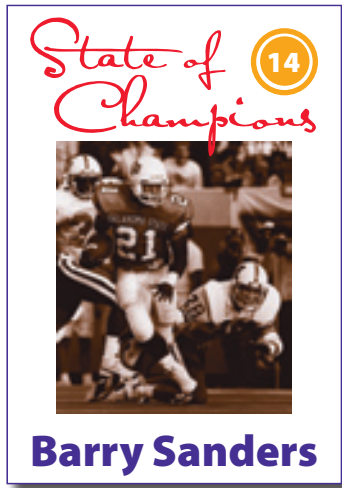
Division All-Around, World Cup Pommel Horse champion, and World Champion Parallel Bars; 1980, top qualified U.S. Men's Olympic Team; 1981, American Cup champion; 1982, American Cup champion; 1984, Team and Parallel Bars Olympic champion; and 1991, U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame inductee.

For twenty years Conner has also worked as a television commentator for ABC, CBS, NBC, ESPN, and Turner. He started Perfect 10 Productions, Inc., a TV production company dedicated to bringing more quality gymnastics meets to television. Their projects include the Junior European Gymnastics Championships from Russia for ESPN, the Arthur Gander Invitational from Switzerland, and Copa Gymnastic from Mexico for Fox Sports Net. He and his wife, Olympic champion Nadia Comaneci live in Norman, Oklahoma, where they own and operate the Bart Conner Gymnastics Academy.

**C**ollege Football News makes the argument that Barry Sanders's 1988 season ranks along side Babe Ruth's sixty home run season in 1927, Wayne Gretzky's ninety-two goal season in 1981-82, and Jerry Rice's 1987 season, when he caught twenty-two touchdowns passes in twelve games.

While at Oklahoma State University, Sanders came out of relative obscurity in 1988 to set NCAA records with 2,628 rushing yards, 3,249 total yards, thirty-nine touchdowns, and 234 points. To put this in perspective, to compare Sanders's yards to teams in 2001, Sanders would be eighth behind Nebraska, Rice, Air Force, Indiana, Kansas State, Colorado, and Ohio. As a scorer, Sanders holds the record for most consecutive games scoring two or more touchdowns rushing with twelve. His electrifying, low to the ground, running style earned him the Heisman Trophy, the Maxwell Award, Big Eight Conference Player of the year, and all-America honors in 1988.

After foregoing his senior year at OSU, Sanders was selected third overall by the Detroit Lions in 1989, becoming the first true junior ever drafted by the NFL. After a brilliant career, and with the all-time NFL rushing record easily within his reach, Sanders retired with 15,269 yards rushing, only 1,457 yards short of the mark. In November 2004 Sanders was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.



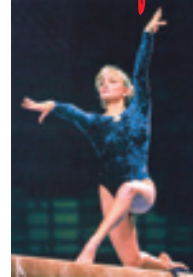


**S**hannon Miller is the most decorated American gymnast, male or female, in history, having won more Olympic and World Championship medals than any other American gymnast. She earned seven Olympic medals and nine World Championship medals since her Elite International debut in 1990. Her two Silver and three Bronze medals at the 1992 Olympics were the most medals won by an American athlete.

During her career, Miller won an astounding fifty-eight international and forty-nine national competition medals. More than half of those medals are gold. In 1996, amidst speculation that she was too old to compete successfully in the sport, she refused to accept any limitations. Miller set her goal and was determined to follow through. That summer she made history both leading the United States Women's gymnastics team, "The Magnificent Seven," to their first gold medal and bringing home the first American gold on balance beam.

Miller is a three-time Sullivan Award nominee (1993, 1994, and 1995), an award honoring the top amateur athlete in America. She won the 1994 Dial Award, America's most coveted award for high school seniors, and at the USA Gymnastics Congress, she was named 1994 Athlete of the Year.

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**Shannon Miller**

## State of Champions 16



**Mat Hoffman**

**S**edmond, Oklahoma, resident Mat Hoffman's name is synonymous with the "bicycle freestyle" scene. The ten-time world champion, Hoffman entered the "bicycle freestyle" circuit in 1984 as an amateur at the young age of thirteen. At age sixteen, he was the youngest pro the sport had ever seen.

Hoffman's unparalleled accomplishments as a rider are equaled by his success in the business world. By 1991 he surpassed the amateur rank, seized the pro division, and brought the sport to new heights never thought possible, inventing the majority of the "vert" tricks today. Frustrated at having someone else in the driver's seat of his career, he began his own promotion company: Hoffman Promotions. He assembled a team of the best freestyle bike riders, and began organizing show tours as the Sprocket Jockey Bicycle Stunt Team. Today, the Sprocket Jockeys are considered to be the best

"bicycle freestyle" road show in the business.

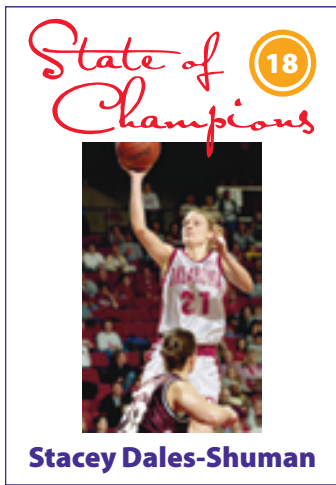
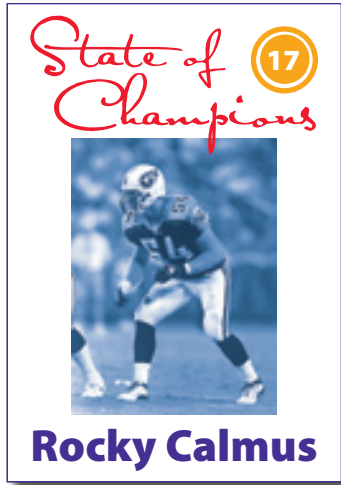
Going through bikes by the dozen, Hoffman's skills surpassed the design technology the bike industry offered at the time. He needed a bike that could stand up to the rigorous pounding required in freestyle riding and realized that he was not the only one. He designed and built his own bike, thus creating his second business: Hoffman Bikes, that are now sold in every major market in the world.

Hoffman has been a key player in building the sport. He developed the Bicycle Stunt (BS) Series to give riders everywhere a place to compete and showcase their talents. The enormous success of the BS Series attracted the attention of sports media giant ESPN, which joined forces with Hoffman Promotions in 1995 to produce and televise the series each year.

During his senior season at Jenks High School, Rocky Calmus was named Oklahoma's Defensive Player of the Year after helping Jenks go undefeated (14-0) and win the Class 6A state championship. As a three-year starter for the Trojans he played linebacker and running back, helping the squad to a combined 39-2 overall record. He rushed for 1,268 yards and twenty-four touchdowns in eight games as fullback and was named MVP in the state championship game. He was twice named All-State and All-American.

Calmus played collegiate football at the University of Oklahoma, where he received First Team All-Big 12 honors during his sophomore year. He was named a consensus All-American during his senior and junior seasons, and was a unanimous All-Big 12 Conference first-team selection. He also won Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year as a junior and senior. Calmus became the first Sooner linebacker to win All-American honors since another Tennessee Titans draft pick, Joe Bowden, did it in 1991. Calmus was also a finalist for the Bednarik, Lombardi, and Nagurski awards. His most memorable moment came during his junior season at Oklahoma when he recovered a fumble that led to the Sooners defeating Florida State and winning their seventh national championship. In 2001 he won the prestigious Dick Butkus Award, presented to the nation's top linebacker.

In 2002 the Tennessee Titans selected Calmus in the NFL draft, and he promptly saw action in thirteen games. In 2003 he secured the starting middle linebacker position during training camp. He played in ten games, before suffering a season-ending injury against the New York Jets.

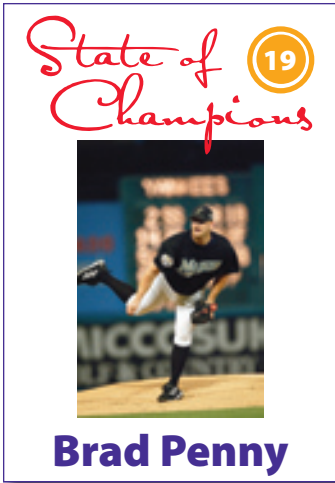


At the University of Oklahoma, Stacey Dales-Schuman was a two-time Big 12 Player of the Year as well as a Wade Trophy finalist. A fierce competitor, an excellent passer, a good rebounder and an intense athlete, she went on to become one of the most talked about basketball players in Oklahoma. She has been credited with helping save the school's basketball program that came close to termination in 1990.

As a player and team captain, Dales-Schuman helped lead the Sooners to the 2001-2002 NCAA Championship game, and was named to the 2002 Final Four All-Tournament team. During 2002 Dales-Schuman led Oklahoma in scoring as well as free throw percentage, and tied for third in rebounds per game. During her college career she was named Big 12 Conference Player of the Year in 2001 and 2002. In addition, she was named a two-time Kodak First Team, Associated Press, and Consensus All-American. *ESPN The Magazine*

named her Point Guard of the Year in 2002.

Dales-Schuman was selected as the third overall draft pick by the Washington Mystics of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) in 2002. In her three seasons with the Mystics, she averaged 9.3 points, 2.6 rebounds and 2.9 assists. She currently serves as a studio analyst for ESPN.



**B**rad Penny is a versatile pitcher with the power to throw a 90 mph fastball. A graduate of Broken Arrow High School, he was All-Metro, an All-State selection, and was named Frontier Conference Pitcher of the Year.

In 1996 the Arizona Diamond Backs drafted Penny in the fifth round. During the 1999 season, Penny was traded to the Florida Marlins, and made his jump from Double-A ball to his major league debut in 2000. He went 8-7 with a 4.81 ERA, striking out eighty and walking sixty in twenty-three outings. His eight victories ranked second among National League rookies. He finished each of his first four big league seasons batting .500 or better.

Brad's pitching arsenal includes a sinker, a curve ball, and an above-average change-up. He also throws a sinking two-seamer in the 92 mph range and a power curveball that buckles knees. All were used effectively in his two wins that

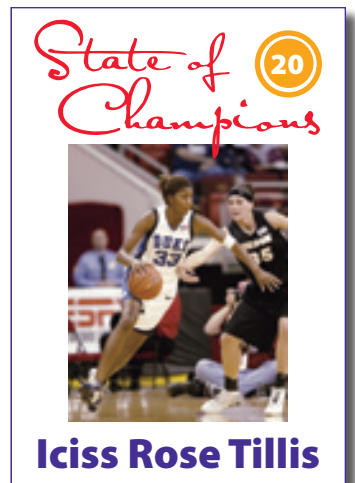
helped the Marlins beat the New York Yankees in the 2003 World Series.

In July 2004 Penny was traded to the Los Angeles Dodgers. In his first start with the Dodgers he pitched an eight-inning, two-hit shutout that showed why the club had snagged him. However, his season came to an end after just three starts with the Dodgers due to a rare bicep injury. After rehabilitation, the club reinstated him for a September 22 start in San Diego. Penny left in the fourth inning with additional inflammation and was shut down the rest of the season. He has returned to the Dodgers for the 2005 season.

**I**ciss Rose Tillis played high school ball at Cascia Hall Prep in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In her junior year she led the Cascia Hall Prep team to a 22-5 record and the triple-A Oklahoma state championship. As a senior she averaged 18.8 points, and 11.5 rebounds, while leading the team to a 25-1 record. She guided the Cascia Hall team to a 91-17 record in four years. Tillis's high school honors include Parade All-America, Gatorade Oklahoma Player of the Year, and a member of Nike Elite Camp top five in the country. Moreover, she was named Tulsa Player of the Year and Tulsa Metro Player of the Year in 1996, 1997 and 1998, and named *USA Today* honorable mention All-America.

At Duke University, Tillis became one of the most versatile players in the nation. As a freshman, she earned All-ACC freshman honors after starting twenty-five of the thirty-four games she played. She also ranked second on the Duke freshman list for rebounds in a season with 188. In her extraordinary career at Duke, she garnered twenty-one double-doubles, sixty-six double-figure scoring contests, and twenty-three games with ten or more rebounds. She was a two-time first team All-ACC selection, and became only the fourth Duke player to be selected Kodak All-America.

In the summer of 2003, she played on the USA Pan American team that posted a 5-2 record and won the silver medal. Selected in the 2004 Women's National Basketball Association draft, Tillis now plays for the Detroit Shock of the WNBA. 🏀



# Helen Earlene Risinger

Born on March 20, 1927, in Hess, Oklahoma, Helen Earlene Risinger grew up during the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, where the western plains of Oklahoma proved to be as harsh and unforgiving as the economic landscape. One of four children born to Homer and Lizzie Risinger, Earlene received the nickname “Beans” for her favorite food staple. As a youngster, Risinger often escaped the rigor of working in the cotton fields by playing baseball with her family and friends. By the time she graduated high school, Risinger had honed her pitching skills. In the spring of 1947, she decided to attend the “tryouts” in Oklahoma City for the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL). The league formed in 1943, when many minor league teams disbanded and the future of Major League Baseball was in doubt, because players either enlisted or were drafted into the armed services. During the “tryouts,” Risinger impressed league managers with her fastball and curve ball, both delivered in overhand motion. The AAGPBL offered Risinger a contract to play in the 1947 season for the Rockford Peaches in Rockford, Illinois.



Photograph courtesy—Helen Earlene Risinger

Risinger borrowed money from a bank in Altus, Oklahoma, for train fare to Rockford. She got as far as Chicago, Illinois, when fear and homesickness overcame her, and she returned to Oklahoma. However, the AAGPBL recruited her again for the 1948 season, and this time Risinger reported to her new club in Springfield, Illinois: the Springfield Sallies. She spent one year with the Springfield Sallies, a team that succumbed to low attendance and little community support. Risinger went to Grand Rapids, Michigan, home of the Grand Rapids Chicks, where she played from 1949 to 1954.

Over the course of her career with the Chicks, the six-foot-one-inch Risinger, averaged a 2.51 ERA. The highlight of her career came in 1953, when she pitched in the final game of the championship series against the Kalamazoo Lassies. With two outs in the ninth inning and the Chicks leading by one run, Risinger faced Doris Sams. A baseball star in her own right, Sams was named to the “all-star” roster six times, and was named Player of the Year in 1947 and 1949. Moreover, she was the AAGPBL home run champion in 1952. Following a pep talk from infielder Alma Ziegler, Risinger struck Sams out with a high fastball, and the Chicks became the 1953 league champions. The championship trophy is on display at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

The AAGPBL disbanded in 1954, and Risinger remained in Grand Rapids, where she enrolled in college and became a x-ray technician. Risinger and her baseball colleagues made an indelible mark on the world of professional sports at a time in American history when such opportunities for women were virtually non-existent. 📌

# Oklahoma's Heisman Winners

**Billy Vessels** • In 1952 Vessels became the eighteenth player and the first Oklahoma Sooner to receive the Heisman Trophy. Vessels played for the Sooners (1950-52) under coach Bud Wilkinson. Although he played only twenty-four games for the Sooners, his swift, tough running style enabled him to garner 2,085 yards and thirty-five touchdowns. He became the first Sooner to gain more than 1,000 yards rushing (1,072) in one season.

**Steve Owens** • In 1969 Owens became the thirty-fifth recipient and second Oklahoma Sooner to be awarded the Heisman. In 1969 Owens carried the ball 358 times for 1,523 yards, and scored twenty-three touchdowns. That year he led the



Sooner Quarterback **Jason White**,  
Oklahoma's latest Heisman trophy winner

Sooners to a 6-4 record, while achieving two 200-yard-plus games. While playing for the Sooners (1967-69), he set several school records including the school's all-time leading scorer with fifty-six touchdowns, the most carries in a game with fifty-five, and career carries with 905. He also finished his career with 3,867 rushing yards, the second most in school history.

**Billy Sims** • In 1978 Sims took home the Heisman, becoming the forty-fourth player and third Sooner to win the coveted trophy. That year Sims carried the ball for 1,762 yards, setting a Big Eight single-season rushing record. Averaging more than seven yards per carry, he rushed for 200 plus yards in four games and led

the nation in rushing yards. He led the Sooners to an 11-1 record, an Orange Bowl championship, and a third place ranking in the final poll. During his career with the Sooners (1975-79), Sims rushed for 3,813 yards and fifty touchdowns.

**Barry Sanders** • In 1988 Sanders became the fifty-fourth recipient and first Oklahoma State Cowboy to win the Heisman. On his way to winning the trophy, Sanders set twenty-five NCAA records including 2,628 rushing yards, 3,249 all-purpose yards, and scored thirty-nine touchdowns. During his career at OSU (1986-88), Sanders rushed for 3,575 yards on 529 carries. He averaged 6.8 yards per carry, and scored forty-eight touchdowns.

**Jason White** • In 2003 White became the sixty-ninth player and the fourth Oklahoma Sooner to win the Heisman. White completed 278 of 451 passes for 3,846 yards, with forty touchdowns and only ten interceptions on his way to win the award. During his career with the Sooners (1999-2004) he started thirty-one of the forty games he played, passed for 7,922 yards, and threw eighty-one touchdowns. 🏈

# Oklahoma's Top 50 Athletes

This list originally appeared in the December 27, 1999, issue of *Sports Illustrated*.

**1—Jim Thorpe**, Keokuk Falls. Gold medalist in heptathlon and pentathlon at 1912 Olympics; Pro Football Hall of Fame; played in majors for six years.

**2—Mickey Mantle**, Spavinaw. Three-time AL MVP; 536 career home runs; 1956 Triple Crown winner with .353 average, 52 homers, 130 RBIs.

**3—Johnny Bench**, Binger. 1968 NL Rookie of the Year; won two World Series as Reds catcher; earned two MVPs and 10 Gold Gloves in 17 years.

**4—Steve Largent**, Oklahoma City. Tulsa All-American led nation in TD receptions in 1974 and 1975; six-time Pro Bowl pick had 819 catches with the Seattle Seahawks.

**5—Lee Roy Selmon**, Eufaula. Won Lombardi and Outland awards at Oklahoma in 1975; NFL All-Pro defensive end with Tampa Bay from 1979 to 1984.

**6—Carl Hubbell**, Meeker. Was 253–154 in 16 years with the New York Giants baseball club, including five straight 20-win seasons in mid-1930s; two-time NL MVP.

**7—Steve Owens**, Miami. Starred in football, track, and baseball at Miami



#3—Johnny Bench

High; ran for 100-plus yards in 17 straight games at Oklahoma; 1969 Heisman Trophy winner.

**8—Paul (Big Poison) Waner**, Harrah. Had 3,152 hits, 603 doubles, 190 triples; won three NL batting titles; four-time NL All-Star; hit .380 in 1927 to lead Pirates to pennant.

**9—Lloyd (Little Poison) Waner**, Harrah. Batted .355 as a rookie with Pirates in 1927; hit over .300 in 10 of his first 12 years.

**10—Allie Reynolds**, Bethany. Yankees right-hander went 131–60 from 1947 to 1954; had two no-hitters in 1952.

**11—Joe Carter**, Oklahoma City. Hit 396 career home runs, plus World Series winner for Blue Jays in 1993.

**12—Billy Vessels**, Cleveland. State champion in low hurdles at Cleveland High three times; won 1952 Heisman at Oklahoma, running for 1,072 yards, 17 TDs.

**13—Darrell Royal**, Hollis. All-American halfback at Oklahoma (1946 to 1949); was 145–38–3 as coach at Texas, where he won two national titles.

**14—Jim Shoulders**, Henryetta. Won sixteen world rodeo titles in 1940s and 1950s: seven in bull riding, four in bareback and five all-around.

**15—Marcus Haynes**, Sand Springs. Led Booker T. Washington High to 1942 state basketball title, then Langston University to a 112–3 mark; later starred for Harlem Globetrotters.

**16—John Smith**, Del City. Two-time NCAA wrestling champ for Oklahoma State; won gold at 1988 and 1992 Olympics.

**17—Don Haskins**, Enid. Star swingman at Oklahoma A&M; coached UTEP for 38 years, winning 719 games, including historic 1966 NCAA title game over Kentucky.

**18—Troy Aikman**, Henryetta. One of only three quarterbacks to lead a team to three Super Bowl wins; holds or has tied 43 Cowboys passing records.

**19—Wayman Tisdale**, Tulsa. Three-time All-American at Oklahoma from 1982 to 1985; top rebounder on gold-medal-winning 1984 U.S. Olympic team.

**20—Bobby Murcer**, Oklahoma City. Five-time All-Star led AL with 102 runs in 1972; played in 1981 World Series with Yankees.

**21—Bruce Drake**, Oklahoma City. Oklahoma basketball coach had 200–182 record from 1938 to 1955; guided Sooners to six conference titles.

**22—Jack Jacobs**, Muskogee. As a junior at Oklahoma in 1941, led nation in punting with 47.8-yard average; next season intercepted 12 passes; starred in Canadian Football League.

**23—Harry (the Cat) Brecheen**, Broken Bow. Left-hander went 20–7

with St. Louis in 1948; two-time All-Star; 133–92 in 12-year career.

**24—Shannon Miller**, Edmond. Won gold medal on the balance beam, member of gold-medal-winning women's gymnastics team at 1996 Olympics.

**25—John (Pepper) Martin**, Temple. Cardinals outfielder dominated 1931 World Series vs. Athletics, getting 12 hits, batting .500, and stealing five bases.

**26—Danny Hodge**, Perry. Two-time NCAA wrestling champion at Oklahoma in the mid-1950s; won national Golden Gloves title as a boxer.

**27—Susie Maxwell Berning**,

Oklahoma City. Three-time state high school golf champion; three-time U.S. Women's Open winner; 11 LPGA tour victories from 1965 to 1976.

**28—Glenn Dobbs**, Frederick. All-American punter at Tulsa in 1942; launched an 86-yarder in 1941 Sun Bowl against Texas Tech; coached Tulsa from 1961 to 1968.

**29—Bob Fenimore**, Woodward. Two-time All-American halfback at Oklahoma A&M, led nation in total offense in 1944, and holds school's career interceptions record (18).

**30—Neill Armstrong**, Tishomingo. Oklahoma A&M wideout led NCAA in receiving in 1943 and 1946; averaged 12.6 yards per catch in five years with Eagles.

**31—Steve Owen**, Cleo Springs. Tackle led Giants to 11–1–1 record in 1927; named coach in 1931, guided the New York Giants football team to 153 wins, and two titles through 1953.



#27—Susie Maxwell Berning

- 32—Jerry Adair**, Sand Springs. Orioles second baseman went, then a major-league-record, 89 games without an error in 1964.
- 33—Gene Conley**, Muskogee. Only man to win NBA title (three as a Boston Celtics forward in 1950s) and World Series (as a pitcher with 1957 Braves).
- 34—Labron Harris**, Wewoka. Oklahoma A&M golf coach led Cowboys to 24 conference titles from 1946 to 1973.
- 35—Alvan Adams**, Oklahoma City. In three seasons at Oklahoma averaged 23.4 points; scored a team-record 13,910 points with the Phoenix Suns from 1975 to 1988.
- 36—Billy Tubbs**, Tulsa. Guided Oklahoma to four Sweet Sixteens and 1988 NCAA title game; has 519–244 career record at three schools.
- 37—Charles Coe**, Oklahoma City. Two-time U.S. Amateur golf champion, in 1949 and 1956; was member of first World Cup team.
- 38—Abe Lemons**, Walters. Won 597 games over 34 seasons as basketball coach at Oklahoma City, Texas Pan-American, and Texas.
- 39—Freckles Brown**, Soper. At 1967 National Finals Rodeo, became first person to stay aboard Tornado, the most famous bull in history.
- 40—Prentice Gautt**, Oklahoma City. Starred in state's first integrated high school title game, in 1954; first black football player at Oklahoma.
- 41—Mark Price**, Enid. Four-time NBA All-Star averaged 19.6 points with Cavaliers in 1989–90.



#50—Bertha Teague

- 42—John (Ski) Levi**, Lawrence. All-American fullback at Haskell College in 1924; spent two years in Yankees system despite never before having played organized baseball.
- 43—Clendon Thomas**, Oklahoma City. All-America halfback for 1956 national-champion Sooners; led nation in scoring with 18 touchdowns and 108 points.
- 44—Lindy McDaniel**, Hollis. Three-time NL saves leader; had 172 saves and 141–119 record from 1955 to 1975.
- 45—Sean O'Grady**, Oklahoma City. Beat Arturo Leon for USBA lightweight title in 1980; in 1981 beat Hilmer Kenty for WBA lightweight title.
- 46—Gil Morgan**, Wewoka. Seven-time PGA Tour winner has 15 victories in four years on Senior circuit, including six each in 1997 and 1998.
- 47—Bryant Reeves**, Gans. Oklahoma State center was first Big Eight player since Wilt Chamberlain to lead conference in scoring, rebounding, and field goal percentage.
- 48—Wilbur Rogan**, Oklahoma City. Kansas City Monarchs pitcher went 113–45 from 1920 to 1938 while batting .343.
- 49—Ed Gallagher**, Stillwater. Father of collegiate wrestling developed more than 300 holds; led Oklahoma A&M to 11 NCAA titles.
- 50—Bertha Teague**, Byng. Coached Byng High girls' basketball team from 1927 to 1969, retiring with 1,157–115 record. 🏀



# Oklahoma State University Wrestling Legacy

Throughout the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first century, Oklahoma State University has established itself as the undisputed powerhouse in collegiate wrestling. The legacy began in 1916 under the leadership of Edward Gallagher, who guided the Aggies on a rapid march to national prominence. Gallagher led the Oklahoma A&M squads to seven NAAU titles, six Southwest Conference titles, and four Missouri Valley Conference titles. When the NCAA sponsored its first national wrestling tournament in 1928, A&M shifted its emphasis toward winning that meet. Oklahoma State won the first NCAA wrestling championship and has since dominated the sport.

Following Gallagher's death in 1940, six other coaches have worked hard to keep OSU at the top of the national wrestling charts. Art Griffith (1941–56) captured two straight national titles before the war forced the Aggies to take three years off the mat. Griffith resumed his winning ways in 1946, taking six more championships in his remaining eleven years of coaching. Myron Roderick (1957–70) became the youngest coach, at the age of twenty-three, to win a national collegiate championship when his 1958 Cowboys won the first of seven for him. Tommy Chesbro (1970–85) led his teams to capture eight Big Eight titles and a single NCAA championship. Joe Seay (1985–91) had five conference team champions and two national titles. Since 1993, former OSU and Olympic gold medal wrestler John Smith has coached the Cowboys, leading them to three more national titles.

OSU has won thirty-three national titles. Moreover, from 1958 to 1996, OSU clinched or shared an impressive twenty-five Big Eight titles out of a possible thirty-eight. Since joining the Big Twelve, OSU has claimed four titles, including the 2001 trophy. 🏆



[Top to Bottom] A gesture of encouragement from renowned Head Coach **John Smith** • Dan Hodge Trophy recipient heavyweight **Steve Mocco** in action • All American, 149-pounder **Zack Esposito** flies toward opponent • The top 174-pounder in college wrestling **Chris Pendleton** takes control.

Photographs courtesy—Oklahoma State University