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.

State of Champions 1



Jim Thorpe

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 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." Mullhall died on December 21, 1940, at the age of fifty-five.

State of Champions 3

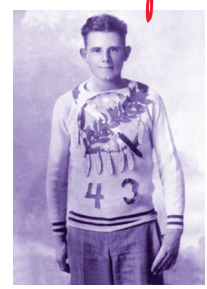


Bill Pickett

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.

State of Champions 4



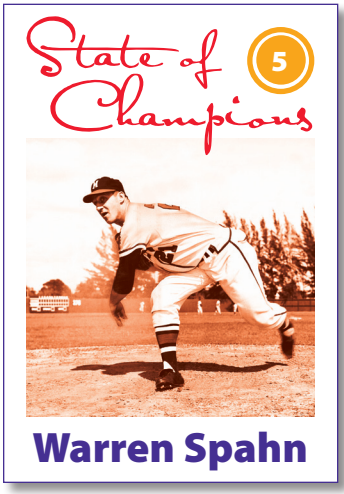
Andy Payne

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 lead 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.

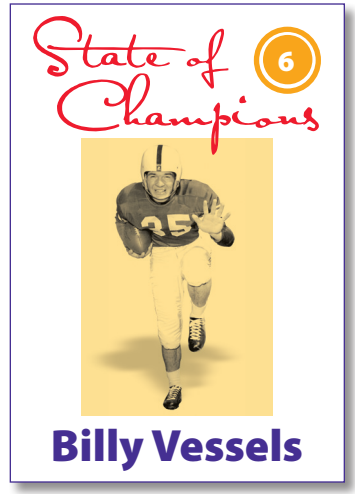
Payne took the $25,000 first prize money and returned to Oklahoma. In 1934 he won election as clerk to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. At the age of forty, he graduated from Oklahoma City University Law School, and continued in his position as Supreme Court clerk until his retirement in 1973. Payne died 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 lead 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.

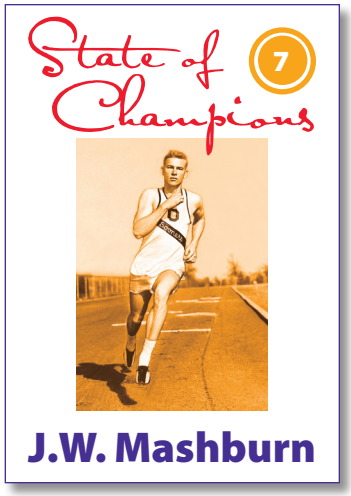
Despite slumping to 18–14 in 1962, Spahn led the NL in complete games, compiled a 3.04 ERA, and tied his career-best record with a 23–7 mark. During his distinguished career, he played for the Boston Braves, Milwaukee Braves, New York Mets, and San Francisco Giants. He retired from baseball at the age 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.

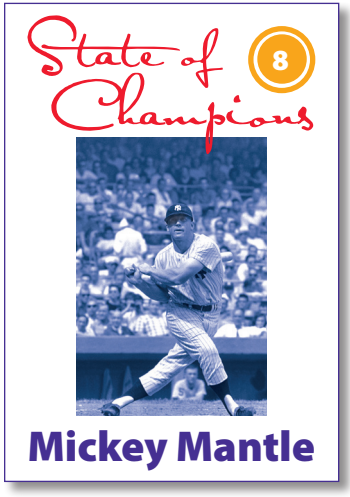
In 1950 he led the first time national champions in rushing with 870 yards on 135 carries, pass receiving with 229 yards on eleven catches, and scoring with ninety points and fifteen touchdowns. In the 49–35 win over the Nebraska Cornhuskers he rushed for a single game Sooner record of 208 yards and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

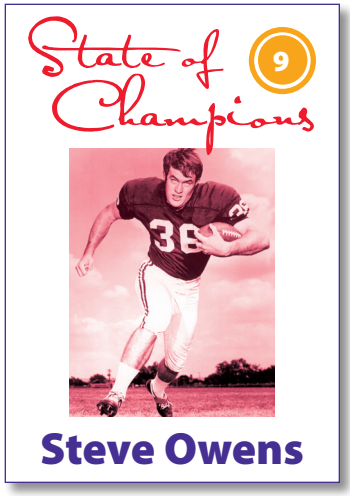
Mashburn concentrated his track talents at Oklahoma State University (then Oklahoma A&M) and became a four-time All-American from 1952–56. While at OSU, Mashburn was the NCAA 400-meter champion in 1955 and again in 1956. His talent also led him overseas as a member of the U.S. Olympic track team where 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.



Born 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.

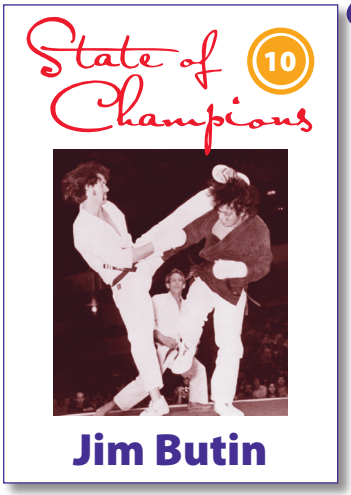
Mantle spent his entire career with the Yankees (1951–1969), leading the Yanks to twelve fall classics in fourteen years, and seven World Series Championships. He still owns records for most homers, RBI, runs, walks, and strikeouts in World Series play. He retired from professional baseball on March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



Born 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 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. Afters 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.



Jim Butin began his martial arts training, under the tutelage of J. Pat Burleson 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.

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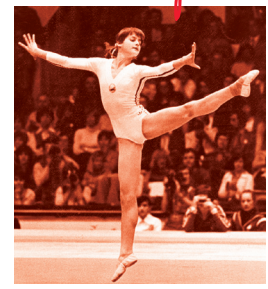


Alvan Adams

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.

State of Champions 12



Nadia Comaneci

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.

State of Champions 13



Bart Conner

Bart 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.

State of Champions 14

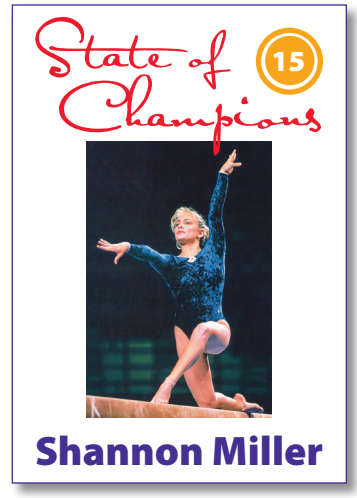


Barry Sanders

College 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 Hesiman Trophy, the Maxwell Award, Big Eight Conference Player of the year, and all-America honors in 1988.

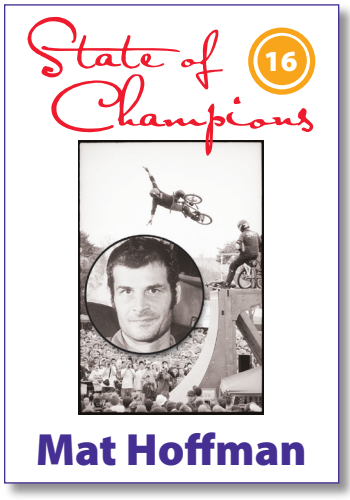
After foregoing his senior year at OSU, Sanders was selected third overall by the Detroit Lions in 1989, becoming the first true junior ever drafted by the NFL. After a brilliant career, and with the all-time NFL rushing record easily within his reach, Sanders retired with 15,269 yards rushing, only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



Shannon 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.

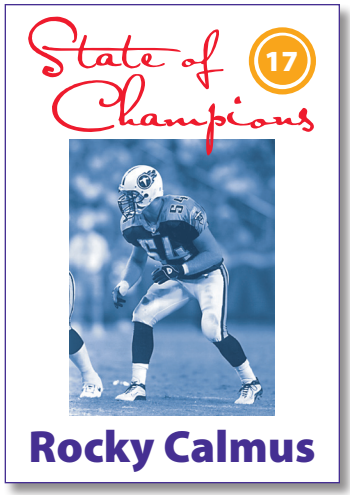


Edmond, Oklahoma, resident Mat Hoffman's name is synonymous with the "bicycle freestyle" scene. The ten-time world champion, Hoffman entered the "bicycle freestyle" circuit in 1984 as an amateur at the young age of thirteen. At age sixteen, he was the youngest pro the sport had ever seen.

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.

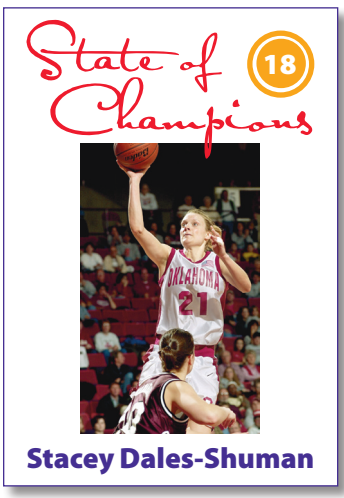
Hoffman has been a key player in building the sport. He developed the Bicycle Stunt (BS) Series to give riders everywhere a place to compete and showcase their talents. The enormous success of the BS Series attracted the attention of sports media giant ESPN, which joined forces with Hoffman Promotions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

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Brad Penny

Brad 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.

State of Champions 20



Iciss Rose Tillis

Iciss 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.