



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

## NEWS RELEASE

### **Four Former Standout High School Athletes Headline 2022 Class of National High School Hall of Fame**

**Notah Begay, Walter Payton, Sanya Richards-Ross, Thurman Thomas  
Slated for Induction**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 8, 2022) – Four outstanding former high school athletes who continued to excel at the college, Olympic and professional levels highlight the 2022 class of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) National High School Hall of Fame.

Joining the four former athletes in this year's class are **three highly successful high school coaches, three former state association administrators, one contest official, and one speech and debate coach in the performing arts area**. The 12 honorees will be inducted July 1 at the 39<sup>th</sup> induction ceremony of the National High School Hall of Fame, which will be held at the NFHS Summer Meeting in San Antonio, Texas.

The four former high school athletes in this year's class are **Notah Begay**, who excelled at basketball, golf and soccer at Albuquerque (New Mexico) Academy in the late 1980s before his successful golf career at Stanford University and on the PGA Tour; the late **Walter Payton**, who was one of the top athletes in Mississippi history at Columbia High School prior to his

legendary career with the Chicago Bears; **Sanya Richards-Ross**, who won 10 individual track titles at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, prior to her highly successful college career at the University of Texas and in three Olympics; and **Thurman Thomas**, a football star at Willowridge High School in Houston, Texas, in the early 1980s prior to his outstanding careers at Oklahoma State University and with the Buffalo Bills.

Three outstanding high school coaches are a part of this year's class, including the late **Ray Crowe**, the iconic basketball coach at Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, who was the first African-American coach to win the state championship in 1955 while Crispus Attucks became the first African-American school in the nation to win an open state title; **Ron Kordes**, who has almost 1,200 victories and has claimed 22 Kentucky High School Athletic Association State Girls Volleyball Championships in 33 years at Assumption High School in Louisville, Kentucky; and **Lamar Rogers**, the winningest girls basketball coach in Tennessee history who has won eight Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association state championships during his outstanding 46-year career at Clarkrange High School.

Three of the most significant leaders of high school activity programs at the state and national levels the past 50 years are being inducted as well, including the late **E. Wayne Cooley**, the legendary executive director of the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union for an amazing 48 years who offered opportunities for girls to play sports long before the passing of Title IX; **Becky Oakes**, executive director of the Missouri State High School Activities Association for 13 years and director of sports at the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) who was the first female to serve as president of the NFHS Board of Directors; and **John E. (Jack) Roberts**, who retired in 2018 after 32 years as executive director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association and seven years on the NFHS administrative staff early in his career and was hailed as one of the nation's most articulate advocates for educational athletics.

Completing the 2022 class are **Jeff Risk**, now retired from a remarkable officiating career in North Dakota that spanned more than 40 years during which time he officiated more than 5,000 high school and college games in the sports of basketball, football and baseball, and **Susan McLain**, highly successful and respected speech and debate coach from Hillsboro, Oregon, who established legendary programs at Hillsboro High School and Glencoe High School.

Following is biographical information on the 12 inductees in the 2022 class of the NFHS National High School Hall of Fame.

## **ATHLETES**

### **Notah Begay III**

**Notah Begay** played and excelled in three sports at Albuquerque Academy in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the late 1980s. Although golf became his primary sport at the college and professional levels, Begay also excelled in basketball and soccer. He played on the first two (1989 and 1990) of Academy High School's eventual six consecutive state championship basketball teams and led his soccer team in assists, earning all-state honors in both sports. Begay was all-state and all-American in golf and was voted New Mexico's high school athlete of the year as a senior. He won the New Mexico Activities Association Class A-AAA state golf title in 1989 and 1990 and claimed the National High School Golf Championship as a senior. Begay earned a scholarship to Stanford University and was a three-time all-American and captain of the 1994 team that won the NCAA national championship. The only full-blooded Native American to have played on the PGA Tour, Begay was a four-time winner and played on the U.S. team at the President's Cup in 2000. Since 2013, Begay has been a golf commentator for NBC and the Golf Channel. In 2005, he established the NB3 Foundation, with the goal to provide health and wellness education to Native American youth in the form of soccer and golf programs.

### **Walter Payton**

Before the late **Walter Payton** became one of the greatest running backs in National Football League history for the Chicago Bears, he was a multi-sport – and activity – star at Jefferson and then Columbia High School in Columbia, Mississippi. Regarded as one of the top athletes in Mississippi history, Payton also was drawn to music at a young age. He was an accomplished piano player, gifted dancer and played drums four years in his high school's band. In fact, Payton did not play football until his junior year; however, he quickly made up for lost time, running for 65 yards and a touchdown on his first carry. After moving from the all-black Jefferson High School to Columbia High School in the middle of his junior season, Payton scored

on touchdown runs of 87 and 62 yards in his first game at Columbia. Payton led the conference in scoring and rushing and a senior, was named the conference's best back and was selected to the all-state team. Payton averaged 18 points per game in basketball, played baseball and won the long jump in the state track and field meet. Payton was a two-time All-American at Jackson State University and led the nation in scoring in 1973. In 13 seasons with the Chicago Bears (1975-87), Payton rewrote the NFL record books with 16,726 yards rushing and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1993. He died in 1999 at the age of 45.

### **Sanya Richards-Ross**

Sanya Richards-Ross was one of the most decorated high school track and field performers during her days at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Richards-Ross won 10 individual titles and was a major contributor to four Florida High School Athletic Association state team championships. Richards-Ross won the 100-meter dash all four years, along with three 200-meter titles, two long jump titles and one victory as a senior in the 400-meter dash, in which she set an FHSAA record 52.51. She was the 2002 Gatorade National Track and Field Athlete of the Year and was a two-time Florida High School Female Athlete of the Year. Richards-Ross was an 11-time All-American at the University of Texas and was the 2003 NCAA champion in the 400 meters. She won four gold medals in three Olympics (2004, 2008, 2012) in the 4x400-meter relay (three times) and the 400 meters, along with a bronze medal in the 400 meters at the 2008 Olympics. Richards-Ross founded the Sanya Richards-Ross Fast Track Program, which benefits children in need in Jamaica. She also participated in USA Track and Field's "Be A Champion" program, speaking to youth in communities across the country.

### **Thurman Thomas**

Before he gained nationwide fame at Oklahoma State University and with the Buffalo Bills, Thurman Thomas was one of the top running backs in the history of Texas high school football at Willowridge High School in Houston. In three varsity seasons, Thomas rushed for 3,918 yards and 48 touchdowns and helped Willowridge amass a 39-3 record, which included two appearances in the Texas University Interscholastic League Conference 4A state football

championship game. After losing in the title game in Thomas' sophomore season, Willowridge returned to the championship game in 1982 on the strength of Thomas' 1,556 rushing yards and defeated Corsicana High School for the state title in only the school's third year of existence. Despite missing three games in his senior season due to injury, Thomas still bettered his junior total with 1,573 yards rushing and helped Willowridge to a 12-1 record before losing in the state quarterfinals. Thomas also played defensive back, returned kicks, played on special teams and rarely came off the field. He also ran track and field and played basketball and was named Athlete of the Decade for the 1980s by the Houston Chronicle. Thomas is the all-time leading rusher in Oklahoma State University history with 4,847 yards and with the Buffalo Bills (12,074 yards) and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2007.

## **COACHES**

### **Ray Crowe**

For a man who only coached high school basketball for seven years, Ray Crowe's impact on the city of Indianapolis, the state of Indiana and the sport of basketball was perhaps greater than anyone who ever coached in the Hoosier state. In only seven years as basketball coach at Crispus Attucks High School, an all-Black Indianapolis school, the late Ray Crowe coached his teams to four Final Four appearances, a record three consecutive state championship games and back-to-back state titles in 1955 and 1956. He became the first African-American coach to win the state championship in 1955 while Crispus Attucks became the first African-American school in the nation to win an open state title. He compiled a 179-20 record in seven years, including a 61-1 record during the 1955-56 years. Known as "A Man Whose Team Awakened a City," Crowe coached many all-star players, including future NBA legend Oscar Robertson, Hallie Bryant and Willie Gardner of Harlem Globetrotters fame, and Willie Meriweather, and was inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in 1968. Crowe, whose success helped racial relations in Indianapolis and eased integration of the public schools, also was an educator, athletic director, school administrator and served five terms in the Indiana House of Representatives.

## **Ron Kordes**

Not only is Ron Kordes the most successful girls volleyball coach in Kentucky history – and one of the best in the nation – he has been largely responsible for the growth of the sport for girls since taking over as girls volleyball coach at Assumption High School in Louisville in 1989. Since that time, Kordes has led the Rockets to an amazing 22 Kentucky High School Athletic Association state volleyball titles in 33 years. Among the 22 state titles is a consecutive streak of eight from 1995 to 2002, and two streaks of four (2004-07 and 2010-13). His teams have been district champion every year but one and have also claimed 27 region titles. Kordes has compiled a 1,185-123 record (90.5 winning percentage), which includes three undefeated seasons and four other seasons with only one loss. Kordes' teams have eclipsed 40 victories on nine occasions, including a school-record 43 wins in 2005, 2011 and 2018. Assumption has been named national champions five times under Kordes, the last coming in 2017 with a No. 1 ranking in USA Today. Kordes assisted the KHSAA in helping to grow the sport of volleyball during the 1990s by traveling across the state to speak at schools and to coaches.

## **Lamar Rogers**

Lamar Rogers is the winningest girls basketball coach in Tennessee history during his 46 years at Clarkrange High School. Not only is his 1,289-290 record the best in Tennessee history, it ranks third nationally behind Leta Andrews and Joe Lombard of Texas, both of whom have previously been inducted into the National High School Hall of Fame. Rogers surpassed Jim Smiddy, another National High School Hall of Fame member, in 2020 for the most all-time wins in state history. Rogers has averaged 28 victories a season during his career that started in 1977, topped by his 2009 team that finished 39-0. Clarkrange has won eight Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) state titles under Rogers' tutelage and finished second three other times. Rogers has coached 36 all-state players, including two TSSAA Miss Basketball selections, and more than 50 of his players have received college scholarships. Rogers was inducted into the TSSAA Hall of Fame in 2009.

## **ADMINISTRATORS**

### **E. Wayne Cooley**

In a year in which the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IX is being celebrated, E. Wayne Cooley had already established athletic programs for girls in Iowa long before the 1972 law in his position as executive director of the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU). Cooley was executive director of the IGHSAU from 1954 to his retirement in 2002, serving the only organization dedicated solely to girls athletics for 48 years. During that time, Cooley expanded girls programs from one sport (basketball) to 10, with all 10 sports begin offered before the implementation of Title IX in 1972. Cooley oversaw the transition of the storied six-on-six girls basketball in Iowa to the five-player game, offering championships in both sports from 1985 to 1994. Cooley's involvement in the Drake Relays led to his involvement in the United States Track and Field Federation (USTFF). He served two terms as president of the USTFF and was selected by NCAA Executive Director Walter Byers to broker a peace agreement between the USTFF (now USA Track and Field) and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) for control of amateur track and field. The two groups merged into The Athletics Congress.

### **Becky Oakes**

Becky Oakes was a leader at every level of high school sports for 40 years – from her six years as a high school coach and two years as athletic director with the Waynesville (Missouri) Public Schools, to her 24 years with the Missouri State High School Activities Association to her final 11 years on the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) staff. After serving as assistant and associate executive director of the MSHSAA for 10 years, Oakes was executive director for 13 years – the second female to serve as a state association executive director on a full-time basis. During her time as MSHSAA executive director, Oakes served four years on the NFHS Board of Directors and was chosen the first female president of the Board. In 1997, as president of the NFHS Board, Oakes testified before the U.S. Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation regarding the Amateur Sports Act of 1978 in support of high school sports and the protection of the interests of the NFHS and its 51 state associations. She also was chair of the NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee for eight years and served on the

NFHS Foundation Board of Directors. In her 11 years on the NFHS staff (2006-17) as director of sports, Oakes was rules editor for the sports of track and field, cross country, volleyball, gymnastics, water polo, and swimming and diving, and she directed the Task Force on Inclusion.

### **Jack Roberts**

From his seven years on the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) staff to his legendary 32 years as executive director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA), Jack Roberts has been one of the key leaders in high school sports nationally for the past 50 years. During his time on the NFHS staff, Roberts was involved with the implementation of Title IX at the local and state levels, and he had immense contributions as the NFHS representative to the landmark Amateur Sports Act of 1978. He also played a significant role in the NFHS rules-writing process as the organization started writing and publishing rules for a number of new sports in the 1970s. At the time of his retirement from the MHSAA in 2018, Roberts was the nation's longest-serving executive director of a state high school association. Roberts's service as MHSAA executive director included substantial growth in participation and the number of MSHAA-sponsored tournament sports, as well as unprecedented advances in the areas of health and safety, sportsmanship and competitive equity. Throughout his remarkable career, Roberts has spoken to education, business and civic groups in nearly every state and five Canadian provinces and has been hailed as one of the nation's most articulate advocates for educational athletics. Roberts follows in the footsteps of his father, John Roberts, executive director of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association from 1957 to 1985, who was inducted into the National High School Hall of Fame in 2000. They are the first father-son team in the hall of fame.

## **OFFICIALS**

### **Jeff Risk**

Jeff Risk is now retired from a remarkable officiating career in North Dakota that spanned more than 40 years during which time he officiated more than 5,000 high school and college games in the sports of basketball, football and baseball, as well as another seven years and 1,000 games in professional baseball. The retired physical education teacher from Minot,



who is one of the most decorated and respected officials in North Dakota history, officiated 38 North Dakota High School Activities Association (NDHSAA) state basketball tournaments, six state football final championship games and three state baseball championships. While his time as an active official has ended, Risk remains involved off the field and courts. He continues to serve as statewide supervisor of basketball and football officials, director of summer basketball officiating camps, observes officials at NDHSAA football finals, and assigns/observes basketball state tournament officials. Nationally, Risk is a member of the NFHS Football Rules Committee.

## **PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Susan McLain**

Susan McLain was a highly successful and respected speech and debate educator in Oregon for more than 40 years at the time of her retirement in 2014. After building a successful speech and debate program in the small Oregon community of Phoenix to launch her career, McLain moved to Hillsboro, Oregon, where she established legendary programs at Hillsboro High School and Glencoe High School. She hosted annual tournaments at Hillsboro and Glencoe and became known for her efficient, well-run events. McLain served in every elected position within the Oregon High School Speech League Coaches Association and, through this service, became involved in the NFHS Policy Debate Topic Selection Committee. McLain co-hosted the Topic Selection meeting when it was held in Portland, and she co-sponsored the 1985-86 debate topic on protecting the quality of water in the United States. In 2014, McLain was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives and serves on committees addressing transportation, education, consumer protection and government effectiveness, and agriculture and natural resources.

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### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)Ri**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school

activity programs, including almost eight million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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