



News Release

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OHSAA To Honor Five Former Ohio Greats At Boys State Basketball Tournament

Jerry Lucas, the late Jesse Owens, Al Oliver, Hopalong Cassady and Tony Trabert Lead Circle of Champions

COLUMBUS, Ohio — For the fourth consecutive year, the Ohio High School Athletic Association has selected individuals who had prominent roles in the history of Ohio interscholastic athletics to become members of the OHSAA's Circle of Champions. The honorees not only had outstanding accomplishments at the high school level, but also have had outstanding achievements after their prep careers ended, have displayed outstanding character and serve as role models.

Honored during the 2010 OHSAA Boys State Basketball Tournament at halftime of the 10:45 and 2:00 Division III semifinals will be **Jerry Lucas**, the late **Jesse Owens**, **Al Oliver**, **Howard "Hopalong" Cassady** and **Tony Trabert**.

Jerry Lucas graduated from Middletown High School, where he was an All-American, National and Ohio player-of-the-year and led the Middies to two state championships and a state-record 76-game winning streak between 1956 and 1958. His 2,460 career points rank 10th in Ohio history, and he holds the state tournament record of 53 points set in a state semifinal.

Following high school, he played for Coach Fred Taylor at Ohio State, and in three years led the Buckeyes to a 78-6 record; the school's only National Championship 40 years ago in 1960; two national runner-up finishes, and three Big Ten championships. He was a three-time All-American; two-time National Player-of-the-Year, and three-time Big Ten Player-of-the-Year while scoring 1,990 points and grabbing a school-record 1,411 rebounds.

Jerry played 11 years in the NBA with the Royals, Warriors and Knicks. He was a seven-time All-Pro; was the NBA Rookie-of-the-Year and MVP of the All-Star Game; averaged 17 points for his career, and his 15.6 career rebounding average is still fourth best in league history. Jerry was on the 1973 Knicks' World Championship team and was selected as one of the NBA's top 50 players of all time.

Jerry was also a member of the 1960 U.S. Basketball Team that won the Olympic Gold Medal; was the first basketball player to have his jersey retired at Ohio State, and was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Ohio State, Jerry is a memory expert and inspirational speaker and currently resides in California with his wife, Cheri.

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The late **Jesse Cleveland Owens** was born September 12, 1913, in Oakville Alabama. Called J.C., he was nine when his family moved to Cleveland, where a teacher thought he said his name was Jesse. The name stuck.

The seventh of 11 children, Jesse won nine OHSAA state track and field tournament events — including four as both a junior and senior — and set seven state records while competing for Cleveland East Tech High School. At the national interscholastic meet in Chicago during his senior year, he set a world record, tied a world record and set a national high school mark.

Jesse then enrolled at Ohio State where he worked several jobs to support himself and his wife, Ruth. It was at the Big Ten Championships in Ann Arbor on May 25, 1935, that Owens performed one of the greatest feats in athletic history. Uncertain that he would even participate after recently falling down a flight of steps, Jesse set world records in the 220, 220 low hurdles and the long jump and tied the world mark in the 100, all in a span of about 45 minutes.

In 1936 he qualified for the Olympic Games, which were held in Nazi Germany amidst the belief by Adolf Hitler that the Games would support his belief that the German “Aryan” people were the dominant race. Jesse had different plans and became the first American track & field athlete to win four gold medals in a single Olympiad. This feat stood unequaled until 1984, when American Carl Lewis matched the accomplishment in the Los Angeles Games.

Jesse Owens proved in Berlin and thereafter that he was a dreamer who could make the dreams of others come true, a speaker who could make the world listen and a man who held out hope to millions of young people. Before dying on March 31, 1980, he worked with youths in Cleveland and Chicago and spoke at various worldwide functions, where he affirmed that individual excellence, rather than race, economic background or national origin, distinguishes one man from another.

Jesse’s spirit still lives in his three daughters, Gloria, Beverly and Marlene, and their work with the Jesse Owens Foundation based on Chicago. Representing Owens will one of his daughters, Marlene Owens Rankin.

Al Oliver was born in Portsmouth. He was a standout in baseball and basketball for the Trojans. Al went on to an outstanding career in Major League Baseball, playing 18 years with seven different teams.

Nicknamed “Scoop,” Al was signed out of high school by Pittsburgh in 1964. He made his Major League debut in 1968 at the age of 21. From 1970 to 1976, he played on five Pirates division championship teams and was on the 1971 team that defeated Baltimore in the World Series. Among his Pittsburgh teammates that year were Roberto Clemente and Willie Stargell.

A lefty who played all three outfield positions as well as first base, Al batted .285 with 17 homers and 70 RBIs to finish second in the National League Rookie-of-the-Year voting in 1969. In his 18 professional seasons, he had a career batting average of .303 with 2,743 hits, 219 home runs and 1,326 RBIs. He batted over .300 eleven times with a high of .331 with the Expos in 1982, and he drove in a career-best 117 runs with the Rangers in 1980. Al was selected to seven All-Star Games and placed among the league’s top 10 hitters nine times.

Al currently lives with his wife Pat in Portsmouth, where he heads the Al Oliver Foundation and is a public and motivational speaker.

Howard “Hopalong” Cassady was born in Columbus, where he was a standout athlete at old Central High School in both football and baseball.

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He attended The Ohio State University between 1952 and 1955 and became a standout football player on both offense and defense. During his career, he scored 37 touchdowns in 36 games and a pass was never completed on him from his position in the secondary. He was All-American in both 1954 and 1955, helped the Buckeyes win the National Championship in 1954, and he won the Heisman Trophy, the Maxwell Award and was named the Associated Press Athlete-of-the-Year in 1955 when he rushed for 964 yards and 15 TDs.

Howard earned his nickname “Hopalong” during his first game as a freshman at Ohio State. Sportswriters equated him to fictional character Hopalong Cassidy who was played by Ohioan William Boyd. He came off the bench to score three touchdowns that day against Indiana. At one time he held Ohio State career records for rushing yards, all-purpose yards and scoring. Hop also played baseball for the Buckeyes, leading the team in home runs in 1955 and stolen bases in 1956.

Howard went on to play nine seasons in the NFL, seven with the Lions and one each for the Browns and Eagles. After retiring from football, he owned a company and worked in manufacturing, then became a scout for his old friend George Steinbrenner and the New York Yankees and served as a longtime first base coach for the Class AAA Columbus Clippers. He still helps the Yankees during spring training.

Hopalong now resides in South Tampa with his wife Barb. He has three children and four grandchildren.

Tony Trabert was born in Cincinnati and became a tennis standout at Walnut Hills High School. He became the first player in OHSAA history to win three straight state singles titles, taking the crowns between 1946 and 1948. He also played guard and was co-captain of the basketball team and helped the Eagles win a district championship.

Tony then attended the University of Cincinnati, where he won the NCAA singles title and the U.S. Clay Court Championships. He also played on the Bearcats’ 1950-51 basketball team.

Tony competed in tennis as an amateur until 1956 and was the world’s top-ranked amateur in 1953 and 1955. During that 1955 season, he won 18 tournaments, including three of the four Grand Slam singles events, the French Open, Wimbledon and the U.S. Open. His record that year was 106 wins and seven losses.

His career saw him win five Grand Slam singles and five Grand Slam doubles titles, and he also was a member of the U.S. Davis Cup Team from 1951 to 1955, helping the 1954 team win the title, and he was that team’s captain between 1976 and 1980.

Among his many honors include induction into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1970, and he has served as the hall of fame’s president since 2001.

Following his playing career and a two-year stint in the U.S. Navy, Tony worked as a teaching pro, motivational speaker and television commentator, where he was known for 30 years on CBS as “the voice of the U.S. Open.” He currently resides in Ponte Vedra, Florida, with his wife, Vicki, and has two children and three step-children.

Past OHSAA Circle of Champion honorees have been: **2007** — Todd Blackledge, Jay Burson, Dean Chance, Archie Griffin, Bill Hosket, Clark Kellogg, Dante Lavelli (since deceased), Cindy Noble Hauserman and Katie Smith; **2008** — Galen Cisco, Jim Lachey, Susan Nash Sugar and Bill Willis (posthumously), and **2009** — Robin Freeman, LeBron James, Larry Siegfried, Dick Schafrath and Mary Wineberg.