



Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation

WINTER
2020/21



RAY EHLERS STADIUM

NHSSHOFF inductee (and former board member) Ray Ehlers of Lexington is among those honored in high school venues across the state (see story on pages 4/5).



GREAT MOMENT IN SPORTS HISTORY

1947's Miracle Mile was one for the ages (see story on page 2).

THE 1947 MIRACLE MILE

Great Moment in Nebraska H.S. Sports History

BY MIKE RASSMUSSEN

NHSSHOFF assistant director

Memorial Stadium at the University of Nebraska was the site of the 1947 Nebraska State High School Track and Field Meet. In front of the largest crowd to see a state meet, spectators were witness to one of the great performances in state meet history. Dubbed the "Magic Mile" by sportswriter Gregg McBride, the dual between Red Cloud's Bill Mountford and Nebraska City's Marvin Zimmerman is a story worth reliving.

The events that led up to this matchup are truly what makes this story so enthralling. Drawing upon a 2006 Tom Ash interview, Gregg McBride's reporting, Harold Scott's (Lincoln High) history and material provided by the Mountford family, we get insight into a race that would not be possible under today's guidelines.

The one common denominator between the two competitors was that neither one of them envisioned becoming a distance runner. Zimmerman of Nebraska City attributed his prowess to his own natural ability and the fact he was "...pretty ornery. If it wasn't for sports, I would probably have been in court." As a 9th grader, he challenged the team's top quarter miler and not only beat him, but set a school record of 54.4 seconds.

Meanwhile, in central Nebraska, Red Cloud's Mountford was looking for something to fill the gap in the spring between football and basketball season. The young sophomore with no access to a track (nor Red Cloud fielding a track team) started to run on his own accord. The new Red Cloud all-sports coach Quentin Sommerfield took Mountford to a meet in Hastings, where he recorded a mile time of 4:51.6 and finished second. It would be the only race he lost in his high school career.

The following year, Zimmerman became serious about his newfound talent. The results were that as a sophomore, he recorded a time of 4:44.6 at the state meet and won the all-class gold medal while competing in Class A. Meanwhile, Mountford representing Red Cloud in Class C, won the class gold medal in the mile. For Mountford, watching Zimmerman race was the first time he was aware of who he was. Zimmerman became aware of Mountford only because a young lady from Nebraska City visited Red Cloud during the summer and reported back that Mountford talked about beating him. Considering the two athletes competed in different classes, that was an interesting boast!

Several factors contributed to how the showdown between the two runners materialized. In May of 1946, as Mountford prepared to enter his senior season, he received a recruiting letter from UNL's legendary track coach Ed Weir. Encouraging him that he could win a

championship, he noted "You can probably move up into the same class as that Nebraska City boy and that should be a feature attraction in the State Meet next year." Of note is that the state rules did allow for schools to elect to move up if they so chose. Enter legendary Omaha World Herald sportswriter Gregg McBride, who began to promote the prospective matchup. Mountford asked his coach and four teammates prior to the spring season if they would consider moving up to Class A. They consented, with the goal that Mountford could race Zimmerman.

The first meeting between the two was not at the state meet, but took place at the district meet in Beatrice. Going into the first matchup, Zimmerman had recorded a season best of 4:37 while Mountford was close behind at 4:38.1. Mountford prevailed by passing Zimmerman down the stretch and won in a time of 4:42, with Zimmerman finishing in 4:44.

The rematch for the 5500 fans state meet fans, the largest number to attend a state track meet, was easily the marquee race. Zimmerman would note in his interview with Tom Ash that his coach had outlined a blistering pace, which he implemented to perfection.

Covering the first lap in 66 seconds, he went through the half mile at 2:13 and was at 3:23 at the three quarters mark. This whole time Mountford, respecting Zimmerman's pace, set in behind and relied on him to get to the last lap. Entering the gun lap, Mountford made his move and took the lead. Zimmerman let him pass and then moved upon his shoulder on the back side. To the crowd, it appeared as if the two athletes were one as they matched strides. Going into the final curve, Zimmerman eased up and waited to sling shot off the curve. Down the final stretch, Zimmerman was surprised at the speed of the lanky Mountford and despite a furious charge he came up just short. Both runners were pursuing the 10-year-old state record held by Falls City's legendary Gil Dodd of 4:28.1. Unaware of the time, Mountford, languishing on the field, heard the crowd roar as legendary announcer Joe Di Natale announced "The winner, Bill Mountford of Red Cloud and the time of 4:26.2. Second place Marvin Zimmerman of Nebraska City in 4:26.5. That ladies and gentlemen is why it was called the Magic Mile."

Zimmerman, disappointed in losing the race, took solace in being able to surpass Dodd's long-time record.

Zimmerman would come back his Senior year to reclaim his second gold medal in the mile in a time of 4:40.1. He attended Wayne State College and competed for one semester before returning back to Nebraska City. He married and raised a family,



District meet, Mountford on the right, Zimmerman on the left



Bill Mountford on the left and Marvin Zimmerman relive their historic state meet matchup in a 2006 reunion.

while working as a rural mail carrier and power plant engineer.

Mountford followed up Ed Weir's recruiting letter and attended UNL. He ran for two years before returning to Red Cloud. He married, raised a family and spent most of his professional life involved in the insurance business as a partner and later owner of an agency.

Mountford's record stood until 1962. There have been other great matchups since that 1947 state meet epic dual. Both gentlemen are quick to give credit to the other that the results of that race would not have been possible without the other. Zimmerman in 2006 noted that the camera angle at the finish gives a distorted view of how close the race was. Examining the final times for both runners is clear evidence of that. On reflection, this brief moment in state track history is really a microcosm of what high school sports is about. Friendly, intense competition and the ensuing camaraderie that emerges and represents all that is good about sports. Thanks Bill and Marvin for the memories!

Catching Up With Hall of Famer

NICOLE KUBIK

Nicole Kubik was a 1996 graduate of Cambridge High School who helped lead Cambridge to 81 straight wins in basketball and three state championships. She was a 3 sport athlete at Cambridge, who was a 4 year starter in volleyball and a state meet track medalist.

She went on to star at Nebraska, where she was the Huskers' first-ever WNBA draft pick (picked in the 1st round by the Los Angeles Sparks). She is a member of the Huskers 1,000-point club and is the Huskers all-time steals leader. Nicole was a 2013 inductee into the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame.

1. What did you do in your post high school career?

After College, I played professional basketball for 2 years (WNBA and Overseas in Athens, Greece). I currently work at Southwest High School as the Athletic Administrative Assistant. I also coach Reserve Volleyball, JV Girls Basketball, and Track & Field (horizontal jumps coach for both the boys and the girls). As a coach, I have been a part of 6 State Championships. I continue to stay active playing multiple sports when I get the chance!!

2. What are your most lasting memories of competing in high school?

Some of the best memories from competing



in high school are the celebrations of the state championships. Competing alongside your friends towards a common goal, then celebrating that with the whole community.

3. Who was your biggest rival (school) and who was your toughest opponent (individual)? This is for HIGH SCHOOL.

I would say our biggest rival was Republican Valley in volleyball. It seems like we played them 15 times every year!!! The year we won state volleyball was the year we moved up to Class C-1 and didn't have to play them at Districts!!

The toughest individual opponent is a tough one to answer. We played against some very talented individuals, but with basketball and volleyball being such team sports, we were

always worried about beating the team and not beating an individual.

4. What were your favorite places to play in high school and why?

Obvious answer is the Bob Devaney Sports Center - playing there means you were playing for a state championship in basketball. The other place that sticks out for me is playing at Gothenburg. It was the game we had our 81 game winning streak snapped, but the place was packed and walking off the court to a standing ovation from both communities, showed a lot of respect for our team and high school girls basketball.

5. What did it mean to you when you were inducted into the Nebraska H.S. Sports HOF, which has now has enshrined 533 athletes, coaches, officials and contributors?

It is such a cool recognition. Anytime you get recognized for all the hard work that was put into becoming the best athlete you can be, it gives you a sense of pride for yourself, your family, your teammates, and your community, all of which pushed you to be a little better everyday. I get excited every year to read about the new inductees, as it always brings back memories of the greatest sports years, your high school years. There just isn't anything that compares to competing with and for your best friends that you grew up with.

Support the Foundation

Former NHSSHOFF President and Director Dick Beechner wants to remind you of ways you can help to perpetuate the mission of our organization:

1. Cash/Personal check (envelope provided in this issue)
2. Securities (such as stocks, bonds, or mutual funds),
3. Commercial, residential, or agricultural property
4. Grain, coins and other tangible property
5. Life insurance/planned gifts through a will, trust, or retirement accounts.

You may direct your gift to any area of the Exhibit Hall that you desire. Naming rights are available for certain exhibits.

We are a 501(c)(3) registered with the IRS. You may want to contact your financial advisor to seek out your best avenue for contributing.

ICONIC NEBRASKANS ARE NAMESAKES IN VENUES THROUGHOUT THE STATE

BY GREG MAYS

*Suiting Up Varsity Podcast and Twitter
(@SuitUpVarsity and suitingupvarsity.org)*

Every Friday night in the fall Nebraska high school athletes and coaches battle in stadiums and compete on fields named for people who came before them. Athletes, coaches, and boosters who paved the way for the current players and helped make athletics such an important part of Nebraska communities are honored in a variety of ways around the state. It is not just football fields; baseball stadiums, gymnasiums, and even annual events bear the names of people so valued in their towns and cities that their names are permanently attached to those communities.

Often schools name their facilities in honor of a highly successful and beloved coach. Many, of course, are also Nebraska High School Hall of Fame inductees.

Gothenburg's football and track facility is named for legendary Sweede coach Dutch Zorn. Fremont plays basketball and volleyball in the Al Bahe Gymnasium, named for the long-time Tiger mentor who coached their 1961 state basketball champs; and the Tigers run track at Jon Appleget Field, named for the coach of multiple track and cross country state titlists. At Battle Creek, the football field is named for Coach Bob Schnitzler who led the Braves to nine titles in three different sports. At Perkins County High School, legendary Grant coaches who mentored a combined eight state championship teams are honored in the gym (Larry Pritchett) and on the football field (Ed Haenfler).

Ansley named its football field after longtime coach Dan Moore. Omaha South's new football stadium was christened Collin Stadium after Packer legend Conrad 'Cornie' Collin who led South to 400 basketball wins and three state titles. Cambridge plays at Clint John Field which honors the coach who first brought the Trojans to statewide success a century ago.

In Lincoln, the Pius football stadium is named for Coach Vince Aldrich who led Thunderbolt football for three decades. Across town at Northeast High School, the gymnasium honors Coach Ed Johnson who won nearly 500 basketball games in 37 years. Just recently, Lincoln Parkview Christian dedicated their football facility as Larry & Carol Frost Field, honoring the husband and wife coaching duo who

led the Patriots in the last stop of their careers that has served schools across the state.

Nebraska's longest and deepest high school sports tradition at Lincoln High has provided names for several of the facilities and events there. The football stadium is named for Coach Ralph Beechner who led High to state championships in football, basketball, track, and golf; and the football field itself honors another hall of fame coach, Biff Pfeiff, who led the Links to three football state titles. Cross country and track invitationals every year bear the name of Harold Scott, who coached those sports for the Links for thirty years.

Lexington is another school that honors its history through a variety of honorary namings. They play football at Ray Ehlers Stadium which honors the longtime Minuteman coach and administrator. They play basketball on Carpenter Court named for Coach Randy Carpenter whose Minute Maids were one of the first girls' basketball teams in the state and one of the most successful during his 37 years at the helm. In the spring their track team hosts the Don Bader Invitational to honor the man who coached four Lex state title teams in cross country and track.

One of the state's oldest and most famed arenas, Jug Brown Stadium in Falls City, with its iconic stone walls, is named for the city's hall of fame coaching legend. In McCook, the historic home of the Bison draws its name from someone whose fame is more local. Frank Weiland was a long-time, beloved McCook science teacher and coach, but not someone remembered far beyond Red Willow County.

As in McCook, many Nebraska communities, big and small, honor coaches and teachers special to them, but whose names might not be on the tip of the tongue elsewhere in the state. Combs Field in Potter is named for Nebraska Eight-Man Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame member Al Combs. Broken Bow athletes call Mark Russell Field home, named for the coach who led three straight state track championship teams in 1959-61. Kuper Field in Minden is named for coach and principal Loren Kuper. North Platte honors longtime athletic director Merle Bauer on their football field. Holdrege fans will recognize that name; Bauer coached the 1967 Dusters to a basketball title. Lyle Buell Stadium in Millard honors the long-time basketball coach and athletic director.



Kuper Field, Minden

Some communities have faculties named after athletes, including a few whose fame extends well beyond the state's borders. National Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Grover Cleveland Alexander's name graces the baseball field in St. Paul. Two other Cooperstown inductees are honored on Nebraska baseball diamonds, Richie Ashburn Field in Tilden and Sam Crawford Field in Wahoo. Hartington named their recently completed sports complex in honor of native son Russ Hochstein who played at Nebraska and in the N.F.L.

The football field at Omaha Northwest is named for Heisman Trophy winner Nile Kinnick, the Benson grad who died while flying for the U.S. Navy in 1943, four years after winning the trophy at Iowa. That field is shared by the Omaha Public Schools, which explains the Benson grad Kinnick being honored at Northwest.

Omaha is not the only place in the state to name a field after a fallen member of the military. In Clay Center, Mills-Schroeder Field is named after Irvin Mills, who died serving in World War II, and Jack Schroder, who gave his life in Vietnam.

Several communities honor former school leaders with their facilities. Prasch Activities Center at Lincoln Southeast is named after John Prasch, a former Lincoln Public Schools superintendent. Burke Stadium (and school) is named after Harry A. Burke, a former Omaha superintendent. The gym at Lincoln Pius X High School is named for Bishop Glennon Patrick Flavin who was named the seventh Bishop of Lincoln in 1967. Fremont Bergan renamed its gymnasium a few years ago to honor former principal and superintendent Gary Schmidt.

In Ainsworth, the elementary school and gymnasium built in 1954 honors Lila Elizabeth McAndrew, who taught there from 1897-1952.

Some honorary names remember important community members and athletic boosters who supported the schools from the outside. The largest example is Lincoln's Seacrest Field which is named for the family that owned the Lincoln Journal from 1887 to 1995 and formed the Seacrest Family Trust to support the capital city community. In Humphrey, their new sports complex is named for Ed Foltz who donated most of the land for the fields. In Wisner the football field is named for Louis Dinklage, a local cattle businessman sometimes referred to as the "King of Wisner." In Arcadia, the baseball diamond is Bud Owens Field to honor a man who spent his life supporting athletics and tending to the field in that community.

In Auburn, the baseball field has been Tushla Field since 1961 when long-time baseball booster and coach Dr. F.M. Tushla died in a plane crash after leaving a ball game. At Blue Hill, the football complex is named for Joel Wagoner, a town native who returned to Blue Hill after retiring and became a tireless videographer for all school activities, sporting and otherwise. In Dorchester, the field honors Miles J. Nerud who organized the town's first youth and Legion baseball programs.

And, finally, some schools name their fields from the folks who had their hands closest to the turf itself. At Meridian and Burwell the fields are named after men who manicured them for decades. Meridian plays on Jim Durflinger Field named for its longtime head maintenance man and football field caretaker. In Burwell, the Longhorns play on turf honoring longtime custodian Bob Price.

Nebraska sports history and the stories of these communities live on through the names on the fields, gyms, and diamonds. Which ones did I miss? What's the story behind the name?



Top row: Larry and Carol Frost Field Parkview Christian; John Stella Field Brown Park. **Second row:** Combs Field Potter Neb. **Third row:** Jon Appleget Track; Dan Moore Field Ansley. **Fourth row:** Stan Macaitis Field Omaha Gross; Collin Stadium Omaha South. **Bottom row:** Richie Ashburn Tilden; Burwell Bob Price Field

From The Executive Director

BY CHUCK JOHNSTON

Executive Director

As we navigate through the pandemic this year, sometimes I feel like we are not really living, and merely "existing" as we get through each day, week and month.

The same could be said for our exhibit hall, but I want to update you on what actually is happening.

While we weren't open for much of the year, we have since re-opened on Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. We also can open at other times for groups. You may call 402-476-4767 or email us at nhshoffff@gmail.com to set up an appointment. We do require face masks, request social distancing, and we have styluses provided for use with our touch screens. In addition, hand sanitizers are located throughout the exhibit hall.

Obviously, high school athletics has continued throughout the state during the fall of the 2020-21 school year. While it has looked different than any year in our history, the NSAA is to be commended for its ability to improvise and remain flexible in order to provide athletics throughout our state. Of course, one way the Hall of Fame is "living" during this time is our effort to chronicle this particularly unique year. As we move forward, our time line and other historical artifacts will reflect the history that has been created this year.

We hope this finds all of our patrons doing as well as they can, and adjusting in the positive way that the NSAA and its member schools have done this year. The Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation and its board is doing all they can to stay in touch with the events throughout the state. We look forward to getting back to our normal hours, operations, etc. in the near future.

Along those lines, we want to be sure that you know that the current plan is to hold the (delayed) 2020 induction class ceremony on April 18, 2021 at a site to be determined. We will have updates on our website (www.nebhalloffame.org) as we get nearer to that time. We would anticipate having a better idea of that by some time in February. Our board members who serve on the selection and nomination committees are already in the process of early meetings to determine the NHSSHOFF induction class of 2021.

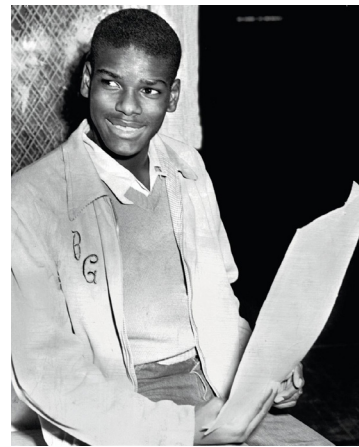
Thank you all for your support. Again, you can be assured that those of us connected with our mission to "Honor the Past to Inspire the Future" are staying active in that effort.

Chuck Johnston

See our updated website for
information about inductees, awards,
donations and nominations at
nebhalloffame.org



IN MEMORIAM



Bob Gibson

October 2020

Omaha Tech H.S. – Athlete



Larry Frost

September 2020

Malcolm H.S. – Athlete



Gale Sayers

September 2020

Central H.S. – Athlete

From The Board President

BY PAT SALERNO

Board President

Thanks to all who have continued to support the mission of the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation during these unsettled times. Through your providing personal financial support, attending your school's Jamboree events, and attending the State Cheer and Dance Championships, you have provided the support that has been needed to allow the work of the Foundation to continue. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of you have not been able to visit our Exhibit Hall this year, but we are hopeful that you will be able to visit when we do re-open.



When you do visit, you will experience updated exhibit areas, including a new interactive football activity and a new interactive baseball/softball activity. At the same time, our interactive basketball, volleyball, and golf exhibits continue to be very popular, and we have also updated and improved other exhibits to include additional information supported by many artifacts and items of memorabilia that you will want to see. In addition, our Hall of Honor provides a large screen format which will allow you to access photos and interesting information on all of our over 500 inductees.

We are hopeful that we will be able to hold our 2020 Induction and Awards Ceremony which, because of the pandemic, was postponed from October 4, 2020, to April 18, 2021. We are also moving forward with the process of selecting the inductees and honorees for the 2021 Induction and Awards Ceremony. Please keep in touch with us through our website for information on the ceremonies being planned for 2021 so that you can participate in the activities of the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame.



The Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame exhibit hall was fortunate to have two inductees visit in October to do television spots for NET ads which will be aired during state championships this year. Eric Crouch (above, Millard North H.S. and 2001 Heisman Trophy winner at Nebraska) is shown here as he discusses his spot with NET personnel. Carol Frost (below, Cedar Bluffs – 1968 Olympian) appraises the jersey of her son Scott (Wood River, Class of 1993). Carol, Scott and Larry (see In Memoriam, page 6) make up the only mother/father/son NHSSHOFF inductees.



NHSSHOFF Hall of Famer Gene Suhr (2013 induction class - along with daughter Leigh) points to a photo of one of his state championship teams featured on the Friday Night Lights wall in the exhibit hall.



Gymnastics Photos - The NHSSHOFF exhibit hall recently received appreciated memorabilia from Phil Cahoy. Cahoy was a 4 time NCAA team champion at Nebraska. The 1978 Omaha South graduate was on the US Olympic gymnastics teams in 1980. Sadly, that team did not participate due to the U.S. boycott of the games.

