**2023 NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS HALL OF FAME**

**Andy Birkel, Lincoln Southeast (2004):** Birkel was undefeated in the 100, 200 and 400 meters as a senior, winning the all-class gold medal in each. He also was a standout on Southeast’s state championship football team. He started his prep career at Lincoln East, where he set a school record with a 90-yard interception return. In college, he earned all-conference honors in football playing at Northern Colorado.

**Nicole Brungardt, Norfolk Catholic (2008):** She set Norfolk Catholic records in volleyball (kills) and basketball (points scored), and won seven Class B gold medals at the state track meet. In college, she started four years for the Wayne State volleyball team and was a two-time track All-American.

**Ted Butler, Lincoln Southeast (1994):** He won back-to-back state heavyweight wrestling championships as a junior and senior, and was a standout center and defensive lineman in football. On the baseball diamond, he led the Knights in home runs and doubles. In college, he was a two-year starter at center for Boise State.

**Matt Herian, Pierce (2002):** A three-year all-state selection as a tight end, Herian also earned all-state honors in basketball, scoring more than 1,000 points, and was a state qualifier in track. At Nebraska, Herian became the Huskers’ all-time leader in receptions and receiving yards for a tight end.

**Lukas Hulett, Bellevue East (2006):** A track specialist, Hulett ran the fastest 400 in Nebraska high school history while winning the 200 and 400 at the state track meet. At Nebraska, he was a four-time All-American and earned 18 Big 12 meet medals.

**Chris Kelsay, Auburn (1998):** He earned all-state honors in football and basketball, and won state meet medals in the shot put for Auburn. He went on to earn All-American honors playing defensive end at Nebraska, and followed that with a 10-year NFL career after being drafted in the second round by the Buffalo Bills.

**Sam Koch, Seward (2001):** While he played multiple positions on Seward’s football team, it was his skills as a punter that made Koch stand out and carried him into his future. He was a two-year starter at Nebraska, setting a school record for average yards per punt. The first Husker punter drafted by the NFL, he spent 16 years with the Baltimore Ravens.

**Dennis Korinek, Ulysses (1951):** A six-man football phenom, Korinek still holds the state’s six-man career scoring record with 821 points, an effort that includes 118 rushing touchdowns. He led Ulysses to the six-man state championship with a win in the 1949 Apple Bowl. He won two events at the state track meet and tied the state record in the shot put before going on to the University of Nebraska, where he lettered three times in football and once in baseball.

**Preston Love Jr., Omaha Tech (1960):** All-state in football and basketball and a state champion in the high hurdles, Love was considered the best football player in the state his senior year. He attended Northwestern on a football and track scholarship, placing third in the Big 10 indoor hurdles, before transferring to Nebraska, where he lettered in football and track.

**Luke Pinkelman, Cozad (2007):** He set a state meet record in the shot put and won the all-class gold medal in the discus his senior year, capping a career in which he won three Class B shot put gold medals and two all-class discus golds. After a year at Iowa State, he returned to Nebraska, where he earned All-American honors in the shot put and discus. Also a football standout, he was a two-time all-state pick for the Haymakers.

**Cami (Hubbs) Pruett, Omaha Westside (2007):** Nebraska’s only undefeated four-time state tennis champion, she led Westside to three state titles while amassing a 117-0 singles record and a 22-0 doubles record. At Ohio State, she set freshman records for most wins in singles and doubles, and was twice voted the team’s most valuable player.

**Stephanie (Streeks) Ruffridge, Gering (1993):** Class A’s record-holder for blocks in a single volleyball match and blocks in a season, Streeks emerged as Gering’s premier three-sport star, earning all-state honors in basketball and winning the all-class gold medal in the high jump. Streeks played at Long Beach State, which won the NCAA volleyball title her redshirt season.

**Tim Cannon, Omaha Bryan/Millard North:** Back-to-back state titles at Millard North capped his 43-year career in boys basketball. His career record was 539-375, including 401-288 in 34 seasons at Bryan and 138-87 at Millard North.

**Jerry Cover, Norfolk:** In his 42 years as a golf coach, the last 37 at Norfolk, his teams were girls state champions three times, and he retired after his 2019 boys state championship team. The Panthers were state runners-up 11 times.

**Dave Eppert, Lincoln East:** A two-time national coach of the year in gymnastics, his Spartans were state champions five times in girls and four times in boys, with seven runner-up teams. East was ranked No. 1 nationally in boys gymnastics in 1988 and 1989.

**Jean Janssen Groth, Wisner-Pilger (deceased):** In only two of her 41 seasons did the Gators finish below .500 in volleyball. Her career record of 828-252 included 14 state tournament appearances, five trips to the state finals and the 1994 Class C-2 state championship.

**Ron Mimick, Aquinas:** The ninth coach to reach the 300-win milestone in football, he’s been at Aquinas since 1991. His football teams have won seven state titles and been in two other finals, and his boys track teams have won two titles and been runners-up twice.

**John Farrand, Lincoln:** Beyond his 41 years in coaching cross country, track and football in Classes A and B, the past president of the Nebraska Coaches Association has been a starter for cross country and track meets, a floor manager for state tournaments and has sat on the board of appeals for the state track meet.

OFFICICAL:

James Ayres, Ogallala: He was involved in wrestling officiating for 49 years, starting with junior varsity matches and working state and district meets from 1976 to 2007, he continued as head supervisor and assistant supervisor of officials at the state tournament until 2019.

**Great Moment in High School Sports**

–Lincoln East’s undefeated 2022 boys tennis team: The Spartans, with three freshmen, two sophomores and a senior, didn’t lose a match all season in any of the four divisions while winning the program’s 11thstate title. Hunter Nelson and Samarth Sajeesh played singles. Kirby Le and Caden Haar, and Joseph Bicknell and Kayden Le, were the doubles teams.

**Dominant Dynasty**

–South Sioux City girls basketball, 1995-2005: The Cardinals, coached by Kelly Flynn, were Class B state champions 10 of the 11 seasons and runner-up the other year.

**Ron Gustafson Inspirational Award**

–Rachel Balkovec, Omaha: The first woman to be a full-time manager of a minor-league baseball team has returned for her second season with the Class A Tampa Tarpons in the New York Yankees organization. The Omaha Skutt and New Mexico graduate has been in pro baseball for 12 seasons.

**Fischer Family Award**

–John and Delores Bellar family, Walthill: The Bellars’ three sons were teachers and coaches – John has retired from BRLD, Jay is retiring as NSAA executive director and Jeff is football coach at Norfolk Catholic — and many of their grandchildren have been high school athletes.

**Golden Anniversary Team**

–Ansley volleyball, 1973: Under first-year coach Pat Hoblyn, the Warriors completed a 19-0 season by winning the Class C state championship.

**Silver Anniversary Teams**

–Blair boys soccer, 1998: Coached by Todd Wick, the Bears, who won their first state title, were the first undefeated boys team in the first 11 years of NSAA-sanctioned soccer and were ranked nationally.

Ogallala girls basketball, 1998: In an epic rematch of the previous year’s Class B final, the Indians beat four-time returning champion South Sioux City 69-58 for their first state title and a No. 23 national ranking by USA Today.