



Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation

SUMMER
2026

Mike Rasmussen A Legacy in History



Mike Rasmussen is retiring from his position of assistant director of NHSSHOFF after thirteen years with the organization. Mike's 42 year career as a teacher/coach and administrator in five school districts prior to his HOF career led to his recognition state-wide and nationally for his efforts.

He is renowned as one of the foremost historians of Nebraska high school sports. In Mike's own words, his work with the Hall of Fame was "a labor of love", and that labor has helped transform the exhibit hall into the finest in the country. Thank you, Mike - and best wishes in all your future endeavors!

Hall of Fame Selects 2026 Class

By **STU POSPISIL**

Four Nebraskans who went on to the NFL and five coaches with a combined 31 state titles are in the 2026 induction class for the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame.

They will be honored at a fall ceremony, which has been set for October 4, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. at Lincoln East High School.

Brett Maher from Kearney and Greg Zuerlein from Lincoln Pius X set records as NFL kickers. Bret Clark and Ken Clark, no relation, had success with Atlanta and Indianapolis, respectively.

Eric Behrens coached seven boys basketball state championship teams at Omaha Central and Rick Collura four at Lincoln Northeast. Pat Dibiase coached 12 swimming teams from Omaha Westside and Omaha Marian to state titles.

Dan McLaughlin is the state's only football coach with playoff championships at three schools (Broken Bow, Norfolk, Millard West). Millard West's Jacque Tevis-Butler, with five titles, is the first girls soccer coach to enter the hall.

The five female athletes span four decades. They are Laura (Anderson) Gibbons, Emily Cady, Shannon Guy-Adamsick, LaQue Moen-Davis and Brooke (Urzendowski) Willman.

Omaha Central gymnast Jim Hruban and Omaha Westside football player Guy Ingles are 1967 graduates. The late Bill Engelhardt from Omaha North, who starred on the 1954 Omaha U. football team, had the earliest career in the induction class.

Jeff Graver enters the hall as an official and the late Steve Roth, a longtime broadcaster as a contributor.

Athletes

Laura (Anderson) Gibbons, Raymond Central (1984): A three-sport standout, she set numerous school records while getting recruited in basketball and volleyball. A Division II basketball All-American at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, she earned the North Central Conference MVP award.

Emily Cady, Seward (2011): The cornerstone of three consecutive Class B state championship basketball teams, Cady also lettered in volleyball and track. At the University of Nebraska, she was a four-year starter in basketball and earned several All-Big Ten honors including Freshman of the Year in 2012.

Bret Clark, Nebraska City (1980): A Class B champion in the hurdles and long jump, Clark was all-state in football and was Nebraska City's basketball MVP. He was a three-year starter at safety



Bret Clark



LaQue Moen-Davis

at NU and a three-year starter for the NFL's Atlanta Falcons.

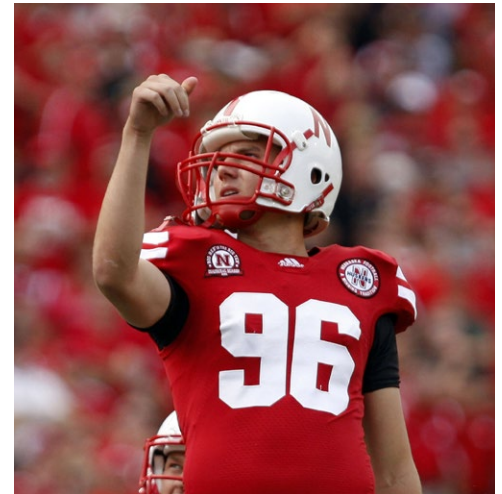
Ken Clark, Omaha Bryan (1984): A two-time all-state selection in football and a two-year starter in basketball, Clark put together back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons at NU and finished his career with more than 3,000 yards. In the NFL, he played three seasons for the Indianapolis Colts.

LaQue Moen-Davis, Omaha North (2011): A solid volleyball and basketball player, Moen-Davis forged one of the state's most outstanding legacies in track and field. Starting at Omaha Central before graduating from Omaha North, she won nine state meet gold medals, establishing state and state-meet records in the long jump, triple jump and 100-meter hurdles. At Texas A&M, she was a seven-time All-American and a Southeastern Conference champion in the long and triple jumps.

Bill Engelhardt, Omaha North (1952): Considered one of the best all-around athletes in Omaha history, Engelhardt led Omaha North to the Intercity championships in football and baseball while adding



Jacque Tevis-Butler



Brett Maher

to the school's success in basketball and track. At Omaha University, he led the nation in total offense and helped the team win the 1955 Tangerine Bowl.

Shannon (Guy) Adamsick, Millard West (2010): Integral to three Millard West swimming and diving state championships, she won 12 gold medals and set several state records. At NU, she set the school record in the 100-meter butterfly and qualified for the 2012 Olympic Trials.

Jim Hruban, Omaha Central (1967): Hruban won back-to-back all-around championships at the state meet as well as several other gold medals. Undefeated his senior season, he claimed national championships in other amateur divisions. He competed collegiately for the University of New Mexico.

Guy Ingles, Omaha Westside (1967): An all-state and All-Metro running back and a state champion long jumper, Ingles sparked Westside to the mythical state football championship his senior year, scoring four touchdowns in a celebrated upset of previously unbeaten Omaha Tech. He played split end and



Eric Behrens

returned kicks as a three-year letterman at NU.

Brett Maher, Kearney (2008): A three-sport standout, at Centennial before moving to Kearney, he won state meet gold medals in the pole vault and long jump for Kearney and set the 3-point record at Centennial. At NU, he earned All-Big Ten honors as a kicker and punter. After four years in the Canadian Football League, Maher played five years in the NFL, setting a single-season kick-scoring record for the Dallas Cowboys.

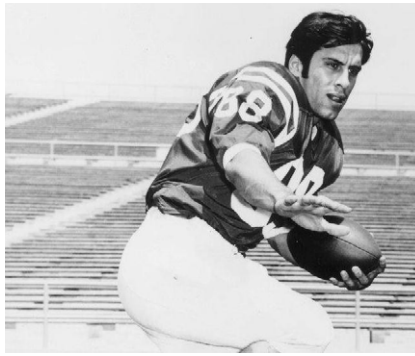
Brooke (Urzendowski) Willman, Omaha Marian (2011): A four-time No. 1 singles state champion, she posted a 115-2 career record, earning the Senior Tennis Athlete of the Year award from the National High School Coaches Association. A four-year letter winner at Saint Louis University, she finished in the school's top 10 in singles and doubles victories.

Greg Zuerlein, Lincoln Pius X (2006): A record-setting kicker, Zuerlein helped the Thunderbolts go 13-0 in 2004 while winning the Class B football championship. He set the state record for field goals in a season and twice earned all-state honors. A midfielder in soccer, he scored two game-winning goals as Pius was Class B champion. An NCAA Division II All-American at Missouri Western, he kicked in the NFL for 13 seasons and was its scoring leader in 2017.

Coaches

Eric Behrens, Omaha Central: The Eagles won seven Class A boys basketball state titles in eight years in his first stint as coach. Including a second stint, following three years at Peru State, his career record was 389-84.

Rick Collura, Lincoln Northeast: The first boys basketball coach to win four consecutive Class A championships and have teams in five consecutive state finals had a 213-56 record in 12 seasons, 10 ending in the state tournament, after a long stint as an assistant



Guy Ingles

at Omaha Westside.

Pat DiBiase, Omaha: A swimming coach for parts of five decades, he took 12 teams to state titles as a head coach (Omaha Westside boys and girls 1979, Omaha Marian 1998, 2000-07, 2015).

Dan McLaughlin, Papillion: The only football coach in state history to take three schools to state championships (Broken Bow (1987), Norfolk (1994) and Millard West (2001) received state high school coach of the year honors before a long stint as Wayne State coach.

Jacque Tevis-Butler, Millard West: In her 30th year as the Wildcats' girls soccer coach, Millard West has been Class A champion five times, district champion 19 times and Metro Conference champion four times.

Contributor

Steve Roth (posthumously): The voice of southeast Nebraska sports on the radio for 14 years, Roth became known statewide from the 20 years he was the play-by-play announcer for NPM's state wrestling championship telecasts.

Official

Jeff Graver, Fremont: Worked state finals in three sports – football, basketball and baseball -- during a 25-year officiating career

that included college games and professional baseball.

Fischer Family Award

Terry and Sonya Gilliland Family, Mitchell:

The Gillilands, Terry the football coach and athletic director at Mitchell for the final 28 of his 46 years in education, watched their children and grandchildren be all-state in football four times, state placers in wrestling five times and state track and field champions seven times.

Ron Gustafson Inspiration Award

Bettie Jo Chambers, Palmyra: Diagnosed with epilepsy as a fourth-grader and with a brain tumor two years later, she was the 2025 Class B 115-pound girls wrestling champion.

Great Moment in High School Sports

Jennifer and Michael Nikkila, Kearney Catholic: They were Class D cross country state champions in 1999, the only sister and brother to win their titles in the same season.

Dominant Dynasty

Cambridge football, 1992-2005: With coach Dan Keyser, the Trojans won six state championships and played in two other state finals while amassing a 149-14 record.

Golden Anniversary Team

Omaha South boys gymnastics, 1977: With future Olympic team members Jim Hartung and Phil Cahoy and current Husker coach Chuck Chmelka, coach Rich Beran's Packers set the state scoring record of 185.7 points.

Silver Anniversary Teams

Seward football and boys track, 2001-2002: The Bluejays were 12-1 in football, avenging a ninth-week defeat to Crete by winning the rematch 35-20 for the Class B state champion. In track, they won Class B with a record 114 points and a record margin



Shannon Guy



Dan McLaughlin



Emily Cady

A STROLL THROUGH THE ARCHIVES

BY MIKE RASMUSSEN

Assistant Director

The history of sports in Nebraska is contained in the minutes of NHSAA board meetings, later to be the NSAA. Examination of minutes starting in 1920 up through 1945 offers several interesting developments and areas of concern. The old saying "you don't know where you are going if you don't know where you've been!" is an apt description. The minutes provide insights into the evolution of sports, illustrating how many practices considered standard today developed from their origins, and challenges surrounding girls sports, finances, organizational structure, the Depression, a world war, etc. Enjoy this stroll back through early sports in Nebraska.

November 1920

The Board adopts rule that all girls games scheduled by NHSAA members shall be played according to girls rules (6 players participating). Offending school shall forfeit.

March 1921

The board reviewed revenues and expenses from state basketball tournament:

Receipts totaled \$7,326.65, with tickets priced at 50 cents to 75 cents.

Expenses included nine new basketballs at \$11.55/each. The NHSAA reimbursed schools for travel costs at 29.9% of the railroad fare for eight team members. Total railroad reimbursement was \$7,322.72.

October 1921

A proposal by Creighton High School suggested that the 440-yard dash be eliminated, as it was too hard for high school lads. No action was taken.

1923 Delegate Assembly

Delegates went on record as opposed to a girls state tournament and interschool athletic contests for girls in general. (There was a girls state tournament in 1923 and again in

1924.)

June 1923

State tournament expenses reported to the board included the purchase of 3,000 muslin numbers and safety pins. Muslin numbers were assigned consecutively to players in lieu of jersey numbers. The muslin numbers are visible on rear view of players in early tournament photos.

March 1924

In an early attempt to bar parochial schools, the board defeated a proposal that NHSAA membership be limited to tax-supported schools.

March 1925

The Board met to consider a trophy awarded to Mead High School, winner of the Saunders County girls basketball tournament. The Board decided the trophy should be changed and inscribed with the following: "Presented by the Mead Community Club to the winners of the Mead-Prague girls' basketball game." Both schools were censored for violating NHSAA rules that restricted girls from being recognized as winners of a tournament. This came after the discontinuation of the girls state tournament in 1924.

1925

The board voted to determine the 1925 state football championship, if possible, with a game to be played in Memorial Stadium pitting Lincoln versus a TBD school from the West.

March 1926

Meeting during the state basketball tournament, the board upheld a protest by Bennet in its game with Deshler on the grounds that the contest might not have been impartially officiated. The game was replayed with four-minute quarters and with officials who were agreeable to both parties. Deshler went on to win the Class Q championship.

Administrators from Omaha Public Schools met with tournament

directors to express concerns over lack of supervision during the state tournament as several incidents occurred in hotels. As a result, no OPS team would participate in the state tournament from 1927-1935 with the lone exception of Omaha Benson in 1931.

December 1926

The end of sanctioned girls competitive sports is noted in the last entry of meeting minutes:

Moved by Mrs. Hazel Wolf of Hampton, seconded by J. G. Masters of Omaha Central, that interscholastic basketball for girls be prohibited on the part of member schools effective Sept. 1, 1927. Carried

1927

Cooperatively sponsored teams are a century old. In 1927, the Board ruled that Greeley may combine the boys of the public high school and the parochial school, making one team. In its ruling, the Board noted that its decision shall not constitute a precedent.

October 28, 1927

Mabel Lee of the University of Nebraska appeared before the Board



Mabel Lee

to present a constitution for a girls athletic association in Nebraska, and requested that the NHSAA assist in its development. Known as the GAA, it provided for intramurals for girls in Nebraska.

The Board assured Miss Lee that they were in full support and that they would promote the association for girls.

1928 Delegate Assembly

H. D. Gish of the University of Nebraska was asked to share his thoughts on curtailing the size of the state

tournament after several years of tournaments with 10 or more classes. Gish stated that unexpected overhead expenses and bad weather had resulted in losses totaling \$16,000 in 1926 and 1927.

The tournament shrunk from 17 classes in 1928 to eight in 1929.

1930

Members of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce appeared before the Board to express their desire to host the state basketball tournament but noted that it was no advantage to business and would not guarantee underwriting tournament expenses. Meanwhile, the Hastings Chamber of Commerce agreed to underwrite the tournament to the extent of \$3,000 and a committee from Omaha offered \$3,000 to cover expenses along with a publicity bureau, meeting rooms and stenographic help.

After months of review, the board unanimously awarded the 1931 championships to Hastings in view of the fact that the association was guaranteeing railroad fare and reasonable meal and lodging expenses to teams, and that many member schools had indicated a desire to stage the state tournament in some other city than Lincoln.

There was only one championship class in 1931 just five years after the 1926 tournament included 22 classes.

October 1933

An early version of wildcard qualifiers emerged when the Board approved a proposal to invite two to four leading Class A teams to the state basketball tournament on the basis of their season's performance without having to compete in elimination tournaments.

1934

At the National Federation meeting in Cleveland, states adopted use of the 29 1/2-inch basketball after reviewing results of scheduled and practice games in Chicago and Wisconsin schools and the impact on reducing hand injuries.

March 1934

The Board denied a request from the



1931 state basketball tourney

Nebraska Department of Veterans of Foreign Wars to sanction an All-Star Football game between players from Nebraska and Iowa high schools.

November 1934

In reviewing district guidelines, the board approved a maximum fee of \$3.50 per game for officials, with expenses added for out-of-town officials as follows: 3 cents per mile round-trip distance to be paid once plus \$3 for meals and lodging to be paid once, with a limit of \$15 in expenses per official.

Also, if any district desires to present the runner-up with a trophy instead of the basketball used in tournament play, the sponsoring school shall pay for such trophy up to \$5 but keep the basketball.

December 1934

The board approved holding the 1935 Class B State Basketball Tournament in Hastings after its Chamber of Commerce agreed to provide facilities free of cost to the association.

March 1935

The board established classifications for the State Track and Field Meet based on average daily attendance:

Class A - Schools over 300

Class B - Schools of 126-300

Class C - Schools of 125 or less

The board set qualifying standards based on the number of schools competing in a qualifying meet:

5-7 schools - first and second places in each event

8-11 schools - winners of first three places in each event

12 or more schools - winners of first four places in each event

The board made no change in the hurdle height from 42 inches. By 1937, the hurdle height was lowered to the present day 39 inches.

Also, amid the Great Depression, the board ruled that boys winning place certificates at the State Track and Field Meet be allowed to purchase medals through the NHSAA office to be paid for either by the school or the boys themselves.

March 1937

Mindful of central control of high school activities, the Board denied a request by the state organization of the Knights of Columbus to sponsor a state basketball tournament for Catholic high schools.

Also, the Board limited athletes participating in the State Track Meet to two track events plus a relay, or one event plus relay for competitors in the 880 or mile. There was no limit on field events.

December 1939

The Board moved to submit an amendment to the Association constitution which would eliminate spring football practice for consideration by the Delegate Assembly.

Adopted in 1940, the ban on spring football practice was interpreted to permit passing or kicking a football as a part of regular sports classes or of a track program, but prohibiting individual instruction.

December 1940

In information to the board, 111 schools reported playing 6-man football while 206 played 11-man. Golf drew its largest number of participating schools, and the first state championships were staged in gymnastics and baseball.

1941-1942

Despite a Board meeting on Dec. 11, 1941, there is no mention of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the impending war. In the first reference to the war on March 13, 1942, the director was instructed to draft a statement regarding activities. It read as follows:

We all know, of course, that it will be practically impossible to maintain all our activities on the same basis as in normal years. however, it seems to me that it is both the duty of the Association and of its member schools to make available to the young people in those schools as much of a program as is possible. Many of the activities sponsored by the Association, because they possess educational values in peace time, become increasingly valuable in war time.

Adults may postpone normal activities without serious effect on their future living, but young people of the high school age pass this day but once. and worthwhile experiences which they are denied at this time will probably never be made up for them.

October 1942

The Board considered the eligibility of Billy Unshler, who was not enrolled during the second semester of 1941-42 because he was serving in the armed forces.

The Board upheld an ineligibility ruling based on the constitution of the NHSAA expressly prohibiting the setting aside of eligibility rules even in the most equitable of cases.

Consideration was also given to a wartime proposal to substitute intramural basketball schedules for inter-school schedules but to continue district and state basketball tournaments.

December 1942

The Secretary read a memo received from the State office of the OPA (Office of Price Administration) stating it was not the intention of the OPA to grant supplemental gasoline rations for the transportation of athletic teams.

1943

Amid discussion of crowd behavior and sportsmanship exhibited in the 1943 state basketball tournament. the Delegate Assembly voted in favor of moving the tournament from Lincoln if the sportsmanship problem is not properly addressed.

In its annual assessment, membership in the NHSAA dropped to 513 schools from its peak of 572 schools during the pre-war period. (Current membership is 310 schools.)

The board noted that "schools have carried on in splendid fashion" while overcoming the availability of adequate teaching and coaching personnel during the war.

1944

In considering eligibility waivers for boys who eventually return from the armed services and reenter high school, the Board instructed the Secretary to prepare five rules covering the matter for members to study in preparation for a decision in March 1945.

August 1945

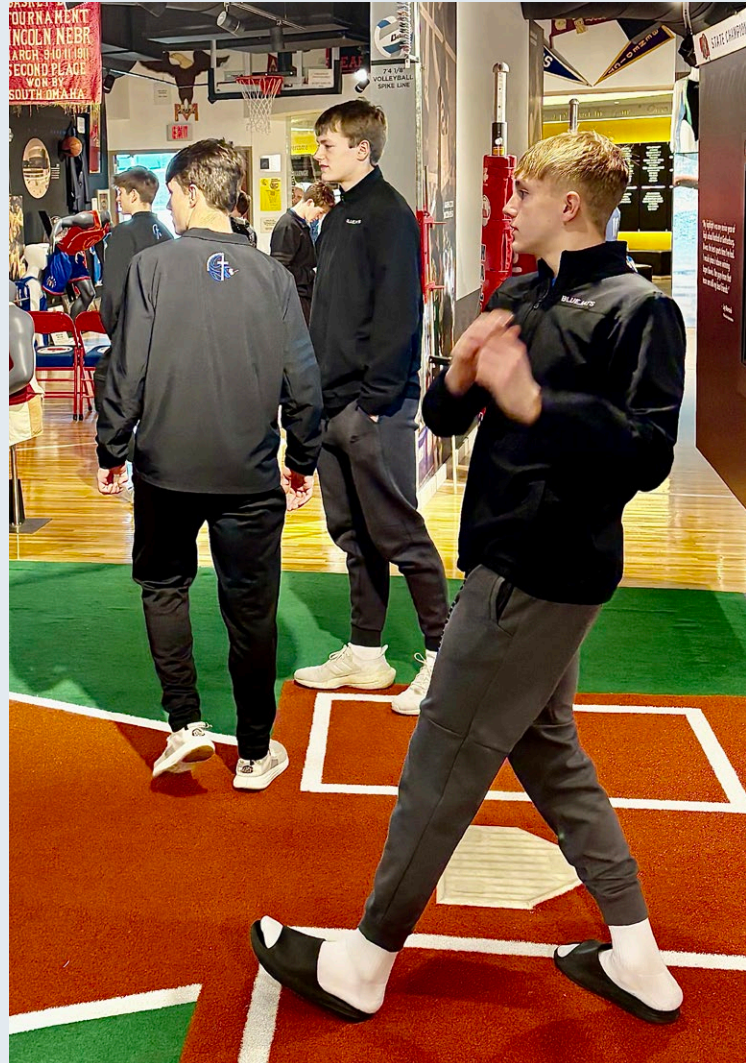
Just days after the first atomic bomb was dropped, no mention was included in an Aug. 8, 1945, meeting. In minutes through the rest of the year, there is no mention of the war concluding in Europe or the Pacific.



The NHSSHOFF is pleased to welcome our new Assistant Director, Todd Henrichs. Todd has a rich history of involvement with high school athletics in Nebraska. He was sports editor for the Grand Island Independent and Lincoln Journal Star, and also a reporter for the Hastings Tribune and the Omaha World Herald. He won numerous accolades for his work with those media entities, and later worked as the Communications Director for the OpenSky Policy Institute. Congratulations, Todd!



Legendary four-time state cross country champion Shona Jones (Hastings High, Class of 1986) stopped by the exhibit hall this spring to check out the exhibits and the Hall of Honor. Shona was also a gold medalist in the 800, 1600 and 3200 meters at state track and a three year starter in basketball.



Kids of all ages enjoy the newly remodeled baseball section and the "home run derby" that is swing simulated on the large monitor.



The NHSSHOFF hosted an Inductee's Day on Sunday, April 19, 2026. Approximately thirty inductees were treated to a tour of the facility and recorded for future use in the Hall of Honor. Visitors will be able to click on an individual and see/hear stories of their high school years. Plans are already underway for the next Inductee's Day!



Gerry Gdowski and wife Sammi (Resh) Gdowski attended the Inductee's Day this spring. Both are NHSSHOFF inductees, joining an esteemed group of athletes who are part of families with multiple inductees.

NHSSHOFF inductees Bob Jensen and Dan Keyser are both proud graduates of Arnold High School. Both were inductees in the NHSSHOFF Class of 2015. Bob (Arnold H.S. Class of 1976) was inducted as a contributor (Huskerland Prep Report founder), and Dan (Arnold H.S. Class of 1975) was inducted after an outstanding coaching career at Lodgepole, Wood River and Cambridge.

IN MEMORIAM



Jim Hartung



Fred Bessler



Tony Davis



This photo shows Mike Rasmussen (see front cover) leading one of the tours during last summer's Nebraska Passport program. Mike's knowledge of prep sports history in the state is certainly among the very best.