

Ohioans in the Olympics

Ohio has had its share of notable athletes through the years

by DAN WOODARD

We all have heard the call — the unmistakable melody of uplifting music that signals the coming of the Olympics. Most of us hear this in passing from our couches while watching TV. A much more select group of Ohioans has heard this anthem and answered by actively participating in the games through the years. Here are some of their stories.

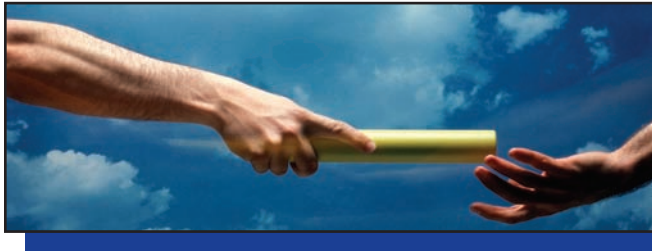
J.C. “Jesse” Owens — track/long jump — (1913-1980) At the age of 9, Jesse’s family moved from

Alabama to the Cleveland area. His family was not prosperous, but a junior high track coach recognized his talent and allowed him to practice before school so that he could keep his after-school job. Later, he attended The Ohio State University and became known as the “Buckeye Bullet,” winning a record eight NCAA championships. At the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, he won four gold medals in the 200-meter dash, 100-meter sprint, 4 x 100-meter relay, and long jump. In the U.S., he often had to stay at “black only” hotels and once even was forced to ride a freight elevator to his own reception.

David Albritton — high jump — (1913-1994) In 1936, as an OSU sophomore, Albritton won the NCAA championship. He tied with Cornelius Johnson at the 1936 Olympic trials to set a world record of 6’ 9 3/4” in the high jump. He went on to win the silver medal at the 1936 Olympics after initially tying with two other contestants. Later in life he became a state congressman, serving in the Ohio House of Representatives from 1961-1972.

Miller Anderson — diving — (1922-1965) Anderson won his first national diving championship in 1942. During World War II, his airplane sustained damage,

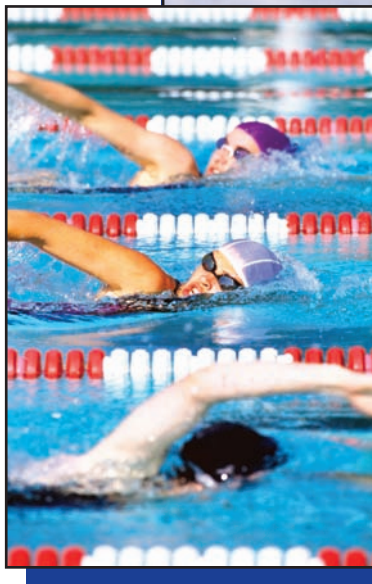
forcing him to bail out during his 112th mission. His left leg was severely injured, requiring surgery and a silver plate in his knee. He had to completely relearn how to dive. Despite this setback, from 1946 to 1948, he won several national championships in the 1-meter and 3-meter events. He also won silver medals in the springboard events at the 1948 and 1952 summer Olympics.



Yoshinobu “Yoshi” Oyakawa — backstroke — (born 1933) Youngest of three children, Yoshi grew up in Papaikou, Hawaii. While at OSU from 1952-1956, he maintained supremacy in backstroke

competitions of the National A.A.U., Big Ten and NCAA. In the process, he held world, American and Olympic records in the backstroke event. He obtained Olympic gold in the 100-meter backstroke at the 1952 Summer Olympics. Later, he taught at Oak Hills High School in Cincinnati for 25 years.

Jerry Lucas — basketball — (born 1940, Middletown) Lucas was offered more than 150 athletic scholarships, eventually choosing OSU. While there, the team went to the NCAA finals each year. At the 1960 Rome Olympics, he led the team as center to a gold medal, making an amazing 84 percent of his shots during nine Olympic games. The following year, his senior year at OSU, he was named *Sports Illustrated* Sportsman of the Year. In 1962 he played for the Cleveland Pipers of the ABL. The following year he moved to the NBA's Cincinnati Royals, where he played through the 1960s. He finished his last few NBA years playing for the New York Knicks, retiring in 1974.



Darrell Pace — archery — (born 1956, Cincinnati) At age 13, Pace bought an archery set using a coupon that gave him a free lesson. He kept buying more lessons and missed getting a spot on the 1972 U.S. Olympic team by just 10 points. One year later he became the youngest person on the U.S. team at the world championships. From 1973 to 1976, Pace won four consecutive

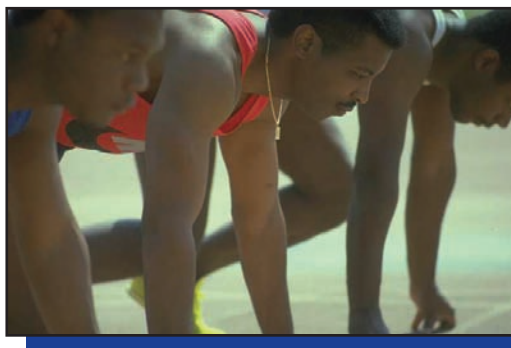
national archery championships, also winning the title in 1978 and 1980. In 1975 and 1979, he won the world championships. He won an Olympic gold in 1976 at Montreal. In 1980, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to a U.S. boycott of the Moscow Olympics, so he was unable to defend his title. In 1984 he won a second Olympic gold medal in his triumphant return at Los Angeles. Pace also helped win a silver medal in the team event in the 1988 Olympics. He still holds the world record of 2,571 points, which he set in 1976. A seven-acre park in Hamilton was named Pace Park to honor his achievements.



(Above) Darrell Pace competed in archery in the 1976, 1984 and 1988 Olympics.

Edwin Moses — 400 meter hurdles — (born 1955, Dayton) His long stride allowed him to take only 13 steps between all of the hurdles, rather than the usual 14 or 15 that most competitors switch to by the latter part of the race. He won Olympic gold at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, but was unable to defend his title in 1980 due to the U.S. boycott. In 1984, he again captured the gold at the Summer Olympics. He won an astounding 122 consecutive races from August 1977 to May 1987. In 1988 he won a bronze medal at the Seoul Olympics. Moses shared the *Sports Illustrated* Sportsman of the Year award in 1984 with gymnast Mary Lou Retton. In 1990, Moses won a bronze medal in the two-man World Cup bobsled race. His hometown of Dayton has honored him by giving his name to a street, Edwin C. Moses Boulevard, which appropriately leads to two of the major sports arenas in the area.

Scott Hamilton — figure skating — (born 1958, Toledo) Scott was adopted at six weeks of age by a family in Bowling Green. At the 1980 Winter Olympics he placed fifth and also had the honor of carrying the U.S. flag in the opening ceremonies. After winning a fourth-consecutive World Championship title in 1984, he turned professional. He toured with Ice Capades for two years but was released after being told “male skaters just don’t sell tickets.” He then turned what might have been a career low into a new beginning, creating Stars on Ice. He toured with Stars on Ice for 15 years before retiring. Scott has been diagnosed with cancer twice — once with testicular, and again with a brain tumor. Both



times he has gone through therapy and emerged from the battle cancer free.

Theresa DeWitt — women’s trapshoot — DeWitt was born in North Carolina but lives in Cincinnati. She has competed for years in trapshoot competition, coming just shy of a medal at fourth place in the 1996 Olympics. In 2008 she won the gold in the World Cup USA competition.



Katherine “Katie” Smith — women’s basketball — (born 1974, Lancaster) Smith grew up in Logan. She helped the U.S. win the 1998 and 2002 World Championships, as well as gold medals in the 2000 and 2004 Olympics. Smith played for the Columbus Quest for two years, then for

the WNBA’s Minnesota Lynx. She currently is playing for the Detroit Shock. She has the distinction of being the all-time leading scorer in women’s professional basketball, with more than 6,000 points.

Lea Ann Parsley — skeleton — (born in 1968 in West Virginia) Parsley grew up in Granville in Licking County, where she volunteered as a firefighter for 20 years. She is also a descendant of the McCoy family of the famous Hatfield-McCoy feud. She won a total of seven World Cup medals during her career and the silver medal at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. Her career was cut short in 2005 when, as she was attempting to qualify for the 2006 Olympics, she and a teammate were struck by a runaway bobsled.

Blaine Wilson — gymnastics — (born 1974, Columbus) Wilson won his first national title at the 1996 Coca-Cola National Championships. He won the Jesse Owens Award in 1997 and has won five consecutive national titles — a feat accomplished by only two other men. He was a member of the 1996, 2000, and silver-medal-winning 2004 Olympic teams.

Dan Woodard is a freelance writer from Dayton.