



CATCHING

MIDWEST MEMORIES

THE KANSAS SPORTS MUSEUM AND HALL OF FAME TAKE VISITORS ON A TREASURED JOURNEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZE BERNARDINELLO

Best baseball pitcher of all time—check.
Most dominant basketball player of all time—check.
Greatest performance by a high school athlete—check.

Kansas honors its greats among many sports with the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame in Wichita and the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame Museum in Newton. “I think the one thing that inspires people is that when they go through, they actually are amazed at how strong Kansas sports history is,” said Dan Heinze Jr., president of the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame Museum (KSHOF Museum).

THE PLAYERS

The surprises begin just inside the entrance, where there’s an autographed photo of the McPherson Globe Refiners basketball team. The team, sponsored by an oil refinery, made up half of the first U.S. Olympic basketball “dream team” to win gold. They did it in 1936, after winning the national AAU championship.

Basketball gets a lot of space, from the game’s inventor, Dr. James Naismith, to Wilt Chamberlain, the only man to score 100 points in an NBA game, to current professionals such as Paul Pierce and Nick Collison.

But other sports get their attention as well. Humboldt native Walter “Big Train” Johnson is considered by many experts to be the greatest

pitcher in baseball history. Interestingly, an old photograph in the museum shows him at bat in a game played in his hometown.

Can you imagine a better football backfield than Gale Sayers and Barry Sanders at running back, John Riggins at fullback and John Hadl at quarterback? All were either born or played in Kansas. Of course, current Kansas State University football coach Bill Snyder is prominently displayed.

Probably the most famous track and field athlete featured is Jim Ryun, the former U.S. Representative who broke the four-minute mile while still at Wichita’s East High, a feat noted around the world. Another is Glenn Cunningham, the “Kansas Flyer” who overcame childhood injuries to set world records in the mile and 800 meters.

Other exhibits cover golf, rodeo, horse racing and wrestling. Several displays mark dynasties enjoyed by the state’s high schools and junior colleges.

For Ted Hayes, president of the closely affiliated Kansas Sports Hall of Fame, some of the best exhibits are the quirkiest. One is the mask that Mike Evans, one of K-State’s most prolific basketball scorers, wore to protect a broken nose. “He could light it up, and he looked like Freddy Krueger,” Hayes says.

Title IX fans will be happy to know that the accomplishments of female athletes are prominently displayed, especially those of Jackie Stiles, the all-time women’s college basketball scoring leader, and Lynette Woodard, four-time college basketball

When the original rules of basketball go on permanent display at the University of Kansas, much of the credit will rightly go to David Booth, the KU alumnus who anted up \$4.3 million for the document.

But it would never have happened without Josh Swade, a 38-year-old Jayhawk booster who spent exactly one year as an undergraduate at KU. Swade heard that the document would be auctioned off at Sotheby’s in New York and set out to persuade Booth and others that they belong here.

Swade made a documentary film about his effort, co-directed by Maura Mandt and titled *There’s No Place Like Home*. In October 2012, it aired as part of ESPN’s 30/30 series.

The two-page set of rules were typewritten in 1891 by Dr. James Naismith, who went on to coach and teach at KU. Swade’s Jayhawk fervor dates to his childhood in Overland Park, when he accompanied his dad

NO PLACE LIKE HOME



to games here. "Terrible seats, a few rows from the top," he says. "We would go religiously—rain, sleet or snow. That's where I fell in love with KU basketball."

Swade, who finished college in New York, describes the making of the documentary as "like living in a Jayhawk fairy tale" as he interviewed current and former KU coaches Bill Self, Roy Williams and Larry Brown for the film. In his first meeting with Booth, the latter says he's "good for a million." He ended up spending quite a bit more.

"Fun doesn't really begin to capture it," Swade says.

The university has announced preliminary plans to build a new building adjacent to the northeast corner of Allen Fieldhouse to display the document. "It definitely will be in a place where the public can enjoy it," associate athletics director Jim Marchiony says. "That's priority No. 1."

All-American at the University of Kansas and the first female Harlem Globetrotter.

HALL OF FAME

The exhibits were originally part of the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame Museum, which began in Topeka as part of the Kansas Centennial in 1961. It was later moved to Lawrence and then to Abilene before landing in Wichita in 2000. In 2012 the KSHOF Museum applied for its own 501C3 status, separating it from the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame not only physically but organizationally as well.

Chisholm Trail Center in Newton is now the home of the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame Museum. All the memorabilia and artifacts are displayed in the museum, and the museum reflects the stories, artifacts and accomplishments of Kansas athletes and teams.

The Sports Hall of Fame is now housed in the Wichita Boathouse overlooking the Arkansas River. The Boathouse displays include silver plaques with portraits and brief biographies of the hall's 219 members, along with a handful of exhibits in glass cases.

"People from out of state are literally blown away when they come here," Hayes says. "People from Kentucky say, 'Why is [former Kentucky coach] Adolph Rupp in here?'" Rupp, a Halstead native, played at KU before going on to coach 42 seasons at Kentucky.

The Boathouse is where new members are inducted, the most recent class joining in October 2012. Most of the artifacts remain on display in the KSHOF Museum in the Chisholm Trail Center, which is operated by a separate nonprofit organization. Both organizations operate under the governance of the Governor Appointed Trustees for the Hall of Fame.

After starting out in 18,000 square feet of space, the museum shrunk to allow another tenant, Jordan Sports, to occupy the front.

"We got creative," says Debra Mitchell, whose family owns the shopping center. "It was difficult to pay an employee to handle the front desk. Now people can enter through Jordan Sports."

Both the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame and the KSHOF Museum currently offer free admissions, although donations are encouraged. Hayes says the two organizations work closely together and continue to collect artifacts not available elsewhere.

"We've have Jim Ryun's Olympic uniform, Glenn Cunningham's track shoes," he says. "Those aren't things that are just generic, they are one-of-a-kind, competition-worn items of tremendous historic significance."

Writer Joe Stumpe enjoys playing sports even more than watching them, even if his 51-year-old body doesn't always cooperate.

TOP CENTER Ted Hayes, president of the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame, stands with a Wichita Shockers uniform at the Wichita Boathouse.

