

Missouri Sports Hall of Fame to induct Royals' Alex Gordon, Chiefs' Curley Culp, NFL's Josh Freeman, KC Wolf's Dan Meers, Kathy Nelson, 9 individuals & 4 programs at Kansas City Enshrinement on Nov. 15

Great Southern Bank-sponsored event set for 1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15 at Hy-Vee Arena

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Kansas City Royals World Series outfielder **Alex Gordon**, Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl lineman **Curley Culp**, and former Grandview High School and NFL quarterback **Josh Freeman** – along with **Kathy Nelson** of the Kansas City Sports Commission and **KC Wolf's Dan Meers** -- will soon be inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame during the Enshrinement in Kansas City presented by Great Southern Bank.

President & Executive Director Jerald Andrews announced the Class of 2020 honorees on Thursday. The Enshrinement in Kansas City features a noon reception and then the ceremony at 1 p.m. Sunday, November 15 at Hy-Vee Arena, the renovated facility formerly known as Kemper Arena. The event will adhere to the City of Kansas City Health Department guidelines.

A sponsorship table of 10 is \$1,500 and includes a Class of 2020 autographed by the honorees as well as recognition in the printed program and at the table. An individual ticket is \$150. Numerous sponsorships are available, including congratulatory ads, to support the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame, a 501c-3 not-for-profit organization. For tickets, call 417-889-3100.

The entire Class of 2020 features:

- **Alex Gordon** -- Kansas City Royals
- **Curley Culp** -- Kansas City Chiefs
- **Josh Freeman** -- NFL quarterback
- **Jack Harry** -- Broadcasting
- **Kathy Nelson** -- Sports Administrator, Kansas City Sports Commission
- **Dan Meers** -- Sports Entertainment, KC Wolf
- **Jack Talley** -- Baseball, William Jewell College
- **Mark Thomas** -- High School Football Coach
- **Bud Epps** -- Athletic Trainer, Kansas City Chiefs
- **Tony Tocco** -- Rockhurst University Men's Soccer Coach
- **Debbie Fay** -- Park Hill & Park Hill South High Schools Volleyball Coach
- **Tracy Rietzke** -- Rockhurst University Volleyball Coach
- **Tim Jermain** -- Jefferson Conception High School Basketball Coach
- **Roger Lower** -- Blue Springs & Liberty North High Schools Softball Coach
- **Kansas City Corporate Challenge**
- **Liberty High School Cheerleading Program**
- **Oak Park High School Baseball Program**
- **Notre Dame de Sion Girls Golf Program & Coach Dana Hoyer**

Alex Gordon – Kansas City Royals

Gordon recently retired after spending his entire 14-year big-league career with the Kansas City Royals. The No. 2 overall selection in the 2005 draft out of the University of Nebraska, Gordon helped to fuel the Royals' second Golden Era as Kansas City won American League pennants in 2014 and 2015, with the 2015 club winning the World Series. His tying home run in Game 1 in the bottom of the ninth inning propelled the Royals to a 14-inning victory and the series momentum. Defensively, Gordon was a seven-time Gold Glove Award winner and set the bar high on playing outfield defense. His 101 assists are the most in Major League Baseball since 2010. Additionally, he ended his career among the top six in 10 franchise categories, including fourth in home runs (190) and sixth in games played (1,753), hits (1,641), runs (867) and RBI (749). He also was a three-time Wilson Defensive Player of the Year Award winner and a Rawlings Platinum Gold Glove Award winner in 2014.

Curley Culp – Kansas City Chiefs

Culp is an inductee of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the Kansas City Chiefs Hall of Fame, having enjoyed a 14-year career in the National Football League. He helped the Chiefs win Super Bowl IV in January 1970 and pushed the Houston Oilers to the 1978 and 1979 AFC Championship games. Along the way, he was invited to one American Football League All-Star Game and earned a string of fives – that is, selection to the Pro Bowl, All-Pro teams and All-American Football Conference teams. A defensive tackle, Culp spent his first six seasons with the Kansas City Chiefs (1968-1974). In the 1969 American Football League Championship game, he made four tackles, two assists and a sack and, in the Super Bowl, had three tackles and assisted on a tackle. Overall, he played in 179 games, including 82 with the Chiefs. Kansas City acquired him in a trade after the Denver Broncos tried to convert him to the offensive line after selecting Culp in the second round of the 1968 draft out of Arizona State University. Culp, who finished his career with the Detroit Lions in 1981, lives outside of Houston.

Josh Freeman – Grandview High School/Kansas State/National Football League

Freeman emerged as one of the top quarterbacks in the state in the mid-2000s. At Grandview High School, he earned Class 4 All-State selection in 2004 and 2005. Numerous NCAA Division I schools recruited him, and he ultimately chose to play for Kansas State, joining the Wildcats along with future NFL star Jordy Nelson, who became his favorite target. At K-State, Freeman threw for more than 8,000 yards in three seasons, which still stands as the best in K-State history. Overall, he threw 44 touchdown passes and ran for 343 yards and 20 more TDs. From there, Freeman was a first-round draft pick of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2009 and spent seven seasons in the National Football League. He was with the Bucs until 2013, and later played for the Minnesota Vikings, Miami Dolphins, New York Giants and Indianapolis Colts. Freeman, who retired from pro football in 2018, is living in Kansas City.

Jack Harry – Media

A sportscaster, Harry covered Kansas City-area sports for 45 years. He served as Sports Director at three television stations in Kansas City: WDAF-TV, KCTV-TV and KSHB-TV. He also regularly appeared on Sports Radio 810 as a commentator and host of the Kansas City Chiefs postgame show. Harry worked closely with golf's Tom Watson to promote the success of the Children's Mercy Hospital Golf Classic for more than 20 years, as the tournament raised more than \$6 million for ill children all across the country. Additionally, Harry has been a play-by-play announcer for a number of athletic events, hosted various sports shows, served as a sporting analyst and covered numerous World Series games, Final Fours and PGA Tournaments. Long-time Chiefs fans will remember him as host of the Hank Stram Show and, subsequently, the Marv Levy Show. He also has been recognized for his decades of covering sports, being named the Joe McGuff Journalist of the Year and received the 2009 Diversity Advocate in Sports from the Olathe, Kan., chapter of the NAACP.

Kathy Nelson – Kansas City Sports Commission

Nelson has worked for the Kansas City Sports Commission for more than a decade, with this year marking her ninth as its President & CEO. She promotes sports locally and nationally with the goal of attracting, retaining and facilitating sports events and organizations. The Kansas City Star ranked her among the 50 Most Influential People in Kansas City Sports History earlier this year, and she was one of only four women represented. Previously, Nelson landed on a 20 Most Influential Sports Figures list in Kansas City. She also has received numerous awards, including from the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and the Kansas City Business Journal. Before joining the sports commission staff, Nelson was a volunteer and member of WIN for KC (Women's Intersport Network) and the sports commission for more than 10 years. Her career also includes roles at Time Warner Cable and Metro Sports as well as FOX4/WDAF-TV.

Dan Meers – KC Wolf

Dan has been the K.C. Wolf, the official mascot of the Kansas City Chiefs, for years. He travels throughout the United States and across the world entertaining thousands of people both in and out of costume. Additionally, his role has enabled Meers to be a motivational speaker. And it all began in Columbia, as Meers got his first shot at being a mascot – Truman the Tiger – in 1986 at the University of Missouri. He was selected as the No. 1 college mascot at the 1989 National Collegiate Mascot Championships one year after finishing second. After graduating with honors, he then turned his attention to St. Louis, where he began his professional career with the St. Louis Cardinals as Fredbird, the team's mascot. He was there for a season and then jumped over to the Chiefs to become KC Wolf. In 2006, KC Wolf was the first NFL mascot inducted into the Mascot Hall of Fame.

Jack Talley – Baseball

The baseball field at William Jewell College is named after Talley, who not only was inducted into the William Jewell Athletics Hall of Fame but also was named in 2002 to the Ban Johnson League's 75th Anniversary Team as one of its Top 50 players. The Ban Johnson League is Kansas City's summer league for the area's top college baseball players. Talley won the league's Hustle Award in 1979 after batting .380, following .322 and .378 batting averages. He also was a two-time All-Star. At William Jewell from 1976 to 1980, Talley was a four-year letterman in baseball. He played on four conference championship teams and two qualified for the NAIA Tournament. The 1977 team won the conference, district and Area IV titles. In the national tournament, he helped the Cardinals place third. Talley was an NAIA Honorable Mention All-American as a sophomore and a Second Team All-American as a senior. All this followed Talley's outstanding career at Excelsior Springs High School. He eventually played in the Kansas City Royals farm system before becoming a successful businessman.

Mark Thomas – Football Coach

Thomas has been a part of seven teams that have played in state championship either as a player, assistant coach or head coach – and six of those teams won it all. As a high school head coach, he is a combined 161-104 through Oct. 16, 2020, with four state championship teams – Boonville (1998 in Class 3), Kearney (2002, 2003 in Class 4) and Odessa (2019 in Class 3). His heading coaching career covers time at Osceola (1980), Odessa (1985-1987, 2013-current), Boonville (1996-1998), Kearney (1999-2006) and Belton (2011-2012). A William Jewell College graduate, he also served as an assistant at Jefferson City (1981-1984, 2006-2010) and the University of Central Missouri (1988-1995). Thomas was a senior on Boonville's 1974 state championship team and an assistant on Jefferson City's 1984 team that won Class 5. He also guided Odessa to a state runner-up in 2015.

Bud Epps – Athletic Trainer

Epps held the role of Assistant Athletic Trainer at the University of Missouri from 1976 to 1985, a time when he served as the Head Athletic Trainer for men's basketball. From 1984 to 2005, he was Assistant Athletic Trainer for the Kansas City Chiefs. In that time, the Chiefs enjoyed 14 winning seasons, which included 12 playoff games and four AFC West Division championships (1993, 1995, 1997, 2003). He also was the Pro Bowl Athletic Trainer in 1993, when he was named the Chiefs Employee of the Year. Since 1977, Epps has been a member of the National Athletic Trainers Association, and since 1984 a member of the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society (PATs), plus past Chairman of the Missouri State Board of Healing Art's Athletic Training Advisory Committee. He has held a state of Missouri registration/licensure since 1985. Epps, an inductee of the Missouri Sports Medicine Hall of Fame and part of the PFATS Athletic Training Staff of the Year in 1991, is a graduate of St. Joseph Central High School and the University of Missouri.

Tony Tocco – Rockhurst University Men's Soccer Coach

Tocco (pronounced Tow-co) will be in his 50th season coaching Rockhurst University men's soccer next spring and holds the second-most career victories (709) all-time at any level of college soccer. He held the NAIA wins record (437) until 2008, or a decade after Rockhurst left the NAIA for NCAA Division II. Tocco's teams from 1973 to 1997 played in 17 national tournaments, advanced to 10 Final Fours and were a national runner-up four times (1973, 1976, 1979, 1997). In D-II, his teams have advanced to 10 national tournaments, won five NCAA Midwest Regionals and reached the national semifinals four times (2013, 2015, 2016, 2017). Tocco has been a 15-time Coach of the Year honoree, including four times nationally. He is a 1967 graduate of Saint Louis University, where Tocco was a pitcher on its 1965 College World Series team and member of the 1964 undefeated soccer team.

Debbie Fay – Volleyball Coach

Fay spent 31 seasons (1983-2013) coaching high school volleyball in Missouri, earning a 789-211-48 record (.753 win percentage). She coached 15 years at Park Hill High School in Kansas City and then 16 more at Park Hill South High School. At Park Hill, she guided teams to 14 Class 4 state tournament appearances – three that led to state championships (1988, 1989, 1997). Her 2005 Park Hill South team was a state runner-up, and her 2013 team there placed third in Class 4. Fay is a 1979 graduate of Oak Park High School, playing volleyball beginning her sophomore season and helped the program to two state tournament berths (1976, 1978). Fay later earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville before beginning her coaching career. She is currently coaching volleyball at Mill Valley High School in Shawnee, Kansas.

Tracy Rietzke – Rockhurst University Volleyball Coach

Rietzke (pronounced Ritz-key) recently retired after 38 years in coaching, including 32 seasons as the volleyball coach at Rockhurst University. His college volleyball teams earned 1,277 wins, the fourth-most all-time at any level. He also is the second-winningest coach all-time in NCAA Division II history. At Rockhurst, his teams were 1,105-229 (.828), finished in the D-II Top 25 poll 11 times, played in 10 Regional finals (winning three) and won three conference championships and five regular-season titles. Rietzke was a 16-time Coach of the Year either in conference, district or region – as well the national award given by the USMC/American Volleyball Coaches Association in 2019. A Kensington, Kan., native, he was a standout basketball player Kansas Wesleyan University and later coached volleyball, women's basketball and softball there for six seasons. Combined with his coaching days at Rockhurst and Kansas Wesleyan, he has more than 1,700 victories in volleyball, women's basketball and softball.

Tim Jermain – Basketball Coach

Jermain is in his 31st year of coaching high school boys' basketball, including 20 seasons now at Jefferson Conception Junction High School following 10 at Albany High School, with 802 wins in boys and girls basketball. He recently ended a brief retirement to coach on a part-time basis. Overall, he is 662-192 as a boys coach, including 494 wins at Jefferson, which has earned seven trips to the Final Four (2001, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2019, 2020). Four of those teams won Class 1 state championships (2006, 2007, 2008, 2019). His teams also won 18 conference championships and 13 district titles. In girls basketball at Jefferson and Albany, he was a combined 140-29, with Albany's 2003 reaching the Final Four. He also has coached softball and boys golf, with a 275-94 softball record that includes two state championships (2001, 2008). An inductee of the Missouri High School Fastpitch Softball Coaches Association Hall of Fame, Jermain is a 1986 graduate of Jefferson High School and a 1990 graduate of Northwest Missouri State University.

Roger Lower – Softball Coach

Lower has been one of the state's most successful high school softball coaches, with more than 500 victories – most of those at Blue Springs High School. Lower spent 20 seasons at Blue Springs, and his teams averaged 23 wins a season and won three state championships in Class 4. The state championships cover the years 1996, 1999 and 2008 fall seasons. Blue Springs also advanced to the state semifinals in 2007 and placed third, and was a state runner-up in 2011. Lower's 2006 team finished 32-0 – the only Class 4 team to go unbeaten and untied in a season. He also was an assistant for the football team at Blue Springs. Lower is now retired and living in Kansas City following with three seasons at Liberty North High School, where he secured his 500th victory in 2019.

Kansas City Corporate Challenge

Founded in 1980, the Kansas City Corporate Challenge (KCCC) is an Olympic-type event that creates opportunities for companies throughout the Kansas City metro area to interact with each other through a variety of sporting events. As the first and largest corporate games in the country, KCCC has grown from 18 companies to over 220 companies and involves more than 33,000 individual participants representing an employee base of more than 150,000. Established on the mission of promoting health, wellness, and camaraderie within the Kansas City corporate community, KCCC offers a diverse array of sporting opportunities. Recreational activities such as darts, horseshoes and fishing are offered alongside events such as softball, volleyball, swimming and running. KCCC is a proud program of Johnson County Park and Recreation District.

Liberty High School Cheerleading Program

When folks wonder about the best cheer program in the Show-Me State, at the top of the list is the Liberty High School Cheerleading Program. It holds the most Class 5 state championships in state history, with 11, and those years cover 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. It also was fifth place in 2004 and 2006 and a state runner-up in 2007. Liberty has qualified for nationals eight times and placed in the Top 15 twice. The program is actually in its 78th year and, like many high schools across the state, turned its attention to competitive cheer years ago. Brenda Moats has been the head coach since 2004 and, in her era, at least 40 cheerleaders have earned college scholarships. Besides cheering for sporting events, Liberty Cheer also performs for numerous children's charity and community events, such as raising money that is then donated to elementary school libraries.

Oak Park High School Baseball Program

The Oak Park High School Baseball Program is one of the best in the state, as the Northmen have advanced to nine Final Fours – with six of those trips resulting in state championships. The state titles cover the years 1968, 1969, 1983, 1987, 1993 and 1995. The Northmen also were third in 1992, 2001 and 2006. Jim Derry coached the first three state championship teams, and Cam Jury led the next three state title teams in his 21 seasons before retiring in 2007. Oak Park fielded its first baseball team in 1966 and has since secured 781 wins, 19 district titles and 18 conference championships. Its head coaches have been Jim Derry (1966-1986), Cam Jury (1987-2007), Troy Andrews (2008-2014) and Will Mayle (2015-present). Derry (1990) and Jury (1997) also are inductees of the Missouri High School Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Notre Dame de Sion Girls Golf Program & Coach Dana Hoyer

- **Notre Dame De Sion Girls Golf Program:** One of the most successful girls golf programs can be found in the heart of Kansas City, as the Notre Dame De Sion Girls Golf Program has won nine state championships and have enjoyed 16 other top four finishes. The state championships cover 1986, 1987, 1989, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. The program began in the mid-1970s and earned its first state medal in 1978 with a fourth-place finish. The mid-1980s began an incredible stretch, as the 1985 team placed third. Individually, Sion has seven individual state championships won by Kelly Cooper (1988, 1989), Emily Hoyer (2001, Class 3-4), Ellen Hoyer (2002, Class 2) and Megan Propeck (2017 & 2018 in Class 2, 2020 in Class 4).
- **Coach Dana Hoyer:** Hired to lead the Notre Dame de Sion Girls Golf Program in 2000, Hoyer recently completed her 21st season. Six of her teams have won state championships, and seven others have finished as the state runner-up (2000, 2004, 2006, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2000). Three others placed third and another was fourth. Hoyer is a 1976 graduate of Grandview High School and a 1980 graduate of the University of Missouri. She took up golf only in her late 20s but grew up in a golf family, which has long been members of Blue Hills Country Club.

End of Release

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