



2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



TROY AIKMAN, QUARTERBACK 1986-89, UCLA

- 1988 Davey O'Brien National Quarterback Award Winner, passing for more than 5,300 career yards
- 20-4 as a starter at UCLA and holds Bruins record for most completions in a season (228)
- 1988 Consensus All-America and 1987 Pac-10 Offensive Player of the Year



Gil Brandt, formerly vice president of Player Personnel for the Dallas Cowboys, remembers the first time he ever laid eyes on Troy Aikman. Mack Brown, then an assistant coach for Barry Switzer at Oklahoma, summoned the young Aikman to his office at Owen Field. Aikman was a rawboned youngster from tiny Henryetta, Okla., during the 1984 season.

"Mack Brown was the offensive coordinator at OU when Aikman was a freshman," Brandt recalled. "I was in Mack's office looking at tape on an old Bell and Howell projector. Mack came in and said, 'We are going to start a new quarterback. I want you to meet him.' A few minutes later Aikman comes into the office

and he is going to be the starting quarterback against Kansas. He says, 'I played for (stuttering) the H-e-n-r-i-e-t-t-a Hens.' The guy is nervous as all get out."

Aikman, who got the starting nod when Danny Bradley was injured, lettered as a freshman and as a sophomore (despite an injury), but elected to leave Switzer's ground-hog offense which would be led by Jamelle Holieway. He left for UCLA and Coach Terry Donahue's passing attack with two years of eligibility remaining. Aikman sat out the 1986 season and worked with current UCLA coach Rick Neuheisel, who was then much lower on the Bruin totem pole.

"I had the pleasure of working with Troy as a graduate assistant during his redshirt year and as the quarterbacks coach during his senior season," Neuheisel said. "Not only was he a great player, but a great team leader. Troy exemplifies the word 'class' and UCLA is extremely proud of all he has accomplished, both on and off the field."

In two seasons at UCLA, Aikman started all 24 games as the Bruins tied for first in the Pac-10 when he was a junior and finished second when he was a senior. Aikman completed 406 of 627 passes (64.8%) for 5,298

yards and 41 touchdowns. His completion percentage ranks second in UCLA history among players who have passed for at least 2,000 yards in their careers.

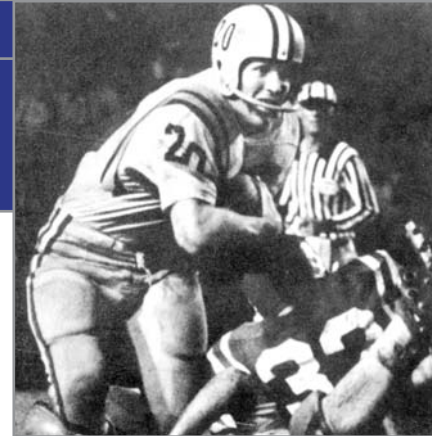
Playing 12 seasons for the Dallas Cowboys, Aikman became the first NFL quarterback to win three Super Bowls in a four-year span (1992, 1993, 1995). He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2006. After retiring from professional football, Aikman went into television and is now a top analyst on FOX. He also hosts a weekly radio show, has several businesses in the Dallas area and runs the Troy Aikman Foundation, which helps disadvantaged children fulfill their physical, psychological, social and economic needs.

"It's an honor to be included in such an exclusive group of players and coaches who have shaped the great tradition that college football enjoys," Aikman said. "College football has meant so much to the sporting history of our country, and it means a lot to me personally. I appreciate that legacy, and I have great respect for those who have been honored before me. The opportunity to share this recognition with my former Cowboys teammate Jay Novacek will make this experience all the more rewarding."



BILLY CANNON, HALFBACK 1957-59, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

- Won the Heisman Trophy and the Walter Camp Player of the Year Award in 1959
- Two-time All-American (Unanimous in 1958 and Consensus in 1959)
- Associated Press and United Press International Back of Year in 1958



Billy Cannon was the do-everything, hometown sensation, a later version of SMU's Doak Walker. The all-purpose stars both won the Heisman Trophy, but played a decade and a few hundred miles apart. The major difference?

Cannon's otherwise brilliant career is often defined by one play, "The Run," on Oct. 31, 1959, at Tiger Stadium — an 89-yard punt return that allowed the top-ranked Tigers to beat No. 3 Ole Miss, 7-3 on Halloween night. Former LSU coach Paul Dietzel, says he describes his reaction to Cannon fielding the punt, "Billy, No-No-No,to Billy, Go-Go-Go."

"We had a rule you were not supposed to field a punt over your head or if it goes (deep, inside the 15)," Cannon said. "I went to the 11 and caught in on the bounce. It was a perfect bounce. Ole Miss had an All-American quarterback, who was their punter, Jake Gibbs. I did break a few tackles....I had broken into clear and was looking straight at Gibbs. I gave him a head bob and went to the sidelines. He rocked back on his heels. The rest was just trying to outrun the cameraman and the referee."

But here's where Cannon showed his versatility on defense. Ole Miss drove right back down the

field, but LSU held on fourth down. Cannon was in on a game-saving tackle with teammate Warren Rabb on the one-yard line.

"When we got to goal line on defense, we would play a Gap Eight," said Dietzel, who also has authored a new book, Call Me Coach. "It was an eight-man front. He was the middle man. He was a linebacker. He normally was a safety. He was just an outstanding player. One of things people did not understand about Billy, he was very, very strong. He could bench press more weight than anybody at that time."

An equally defining and possibly even more important play was in the Sugar Bowl as a junior, when Cannon's halfback option pass beat Clemson, 7-0, capping a perfect 11-0 season and national title in 1958.

"I had thrown the run pass six or seven times that year," Cannon said. "All of the films they saw of us, those they hadn't seen. I threw it out of the pocket. I had two receivers standing in the end zone and nobody was around them. Over the years, Scotty McClain has told me, 'Hell, I was more open than Mangham (Mickey, another end, who caught the pass).' That has gone on for 50 years. It was a perfect pass, just a perfect spiral. One guy thought

they could fair catch it."

During Cannon's career, the Tigers were 20-2 his final two seasons and at one point had a 19-game winning streak. Before he started playing, the Tigers had suffered through three straight losing seasons.

"Looking back over 50 years, I came to a program totally down, we had great success and great fun and got a great education," said Cannon, 70, currently head of dentistry at Louisiana State Prison in Angola. "A lot of those players are still active...elected officials, lawyers, judges....Being with those guys for four years is a wonderful thing to look back on. Those were great days."

A 1960 first round AFL Draft pick, he played 11 seasons in the pros with the Houston Oilers, Oakland Raiders and Kansas City Chiefs.



2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



JIM DOMBROWSKI, OFFENSIVE TACKLE 1982-85, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

- Two-time winner of Jacobs Blocking Trophy (ACC's Best Blocker) in 1984-85
- Unanimous First Team All-America in 1985
- NCAA's Top Six Award recipient for athletic and academic excellence and leadership skills



Growing up in Williamsville, N.Y., Jim Dombrowski might have had illusions about becoming the next Ken Dryden in the NHL. A standout in high school hockey, Dombrowski had no idea he would become a college football star at Virginia, play 11 seasons in the NFL, and eventually land in the College Football Hall of Fame.

"I always enjoyed athletics no matter what sport I was playing when I was growing up," Dombrowski said at the time of his announcement. "I just wanted to go out there and do the best I could. I never thought about a college football scholarship until I started getting recruited after my senior year."

Virginia head coach Dick Bestwick didn't get to

see results of his recruiting efforts bear fruit on the football field. By the time Dombrowski stepped on the field in the fall of 1982 after redshirting his first season, Bestwick was no longer Virginia's head coach. After a 1-10 record in 1981, George Welsh took Bestwick's place as the Cavaliers head coach.

"I recruited the best class Virginia had ever had," said Bestwick, who then made the decision to redshirt many of those players as freshmen. "He (Dombrowski) could have played as a freshman. It would have made it better. I held him out in spite of that fact, and then I lost my job. I thought it was theirs and the program's best interest for them to redshirt."

Dombrowski anchored the Virginia line four straight seasons under Welsh. After a 2-9 record in 1982, Virginia posted three straight winning seasons with Dombrowski on the offensive line. And Welsh was on his way to a successful 19-year coaching run in Charlottesville. The highlight of Dombrowski's stay was an 8-2-2 record in 1984 when the Cavaliers went to their first bowl in history, the Peach, and beat Purdue, 27-24.

"I think George (Welsh) would be the first to

admit that Coach Bestwick and his staff gave them some pretty good players that they were able to build upon and through everybody's hard work were able to get the program going in the right direction," Dombrowski said. "I think that Coach Bestwick and his staff kind of turned the tide from the regime that was there prior to them."

"But obviously I have a tremendous sense of pride that the group of guys that I went to school were able to get the ball rolling downhill, and through the remainder of George's tenure, they took the ball and ran."

Dombrowski's plans to go to medical school were disrupted by the 1986 NFL Draft when he was selected in the first round at No. 6 by the New Orleans Saints. After playing 11 seasons for the Saints, he settled in the New Orleans area where he is now a certified financial planner. He was inducted into the Saints Hall of Fame in 2003.

When Dombrowski got the word last spring he would be on the dais with all the other college football stars, he said, "If anybody dreams that stuff, I think they are pulling your leg."



PAT FITZGERALD, LINEBACKER 1993-96, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

- Two-time consensus First Team All-America selection
- Only back-to-back winner of Bronko Nagurski and Chuck Bednarik awards
- Anchored Wildcat team that claimed back-to-back Big Ten titles in 1995 and 1996



Pat Fitzgerald was a reluctant participant in Pee Wee Football, but he quickly learned about putting on his pads, the team concept and the camaraderie born on the field. Those lessons would eventually lead him to star for Northwestern University as a linebacker-tackle machine in the mid 1990s.

"I remember coming home after school and putting our uniforms on and I said I didn't want to go," Fitzgerald said. "That was the first lesson I learned in football from my mother and my father - you are never going to quit. You persevere and don't quit."

"When I didn't think I could do anything except maybe play in high school, my linebackers coach said, 'You have an opportunity and we are going to take advantage of it.' I would come in at 6 a.m., 7 a.m. in the morning and work out before school. I never dreamed I was going to have an opportunity to play college football. And then that opportunity happened for me at Northwestern."

Coming out of Carl Sandburg High School (Ill.), Fitzgerald remembers struggling to become a starter at Northwestern, then a fledgling Big Ten team under Coach Gary Barnett.

"I talked to Coach Barnett after they gave me the

call and let him know I was going to be bestowed this honor," Fitzgerald remembered. "I said, 'Coach I remember back to spring practice of sophomore year, I just wanted to find a way to get out on the field and start.' And he chuckled and said, 'Yeah, you barely made it.' And I thought that was pretty ironic going from a team that hadn't had a winning season since 1971 to going 15-1 (over two seasons in league play) and winning back-to-back Big Ten championships. I sit here today because of the team not because of me. And I mean that with all sincerity."

Northwestern led the nation in scoring defense (12.7 ppg) in 1995, won the Big Ten title and lost to Southern California, 41-32, in the Rose Bowl without Fitzgerald, who suffered a broken leg late in the season.

"He was the heart and soul, nuts and bolts of that Rose Bowl defense," said Bowling Green head coach Gregg Brandon, a former Northwestern assistant. "He didn't get to play in the Rose Bowl because of his injury. And I remember going into the training room after the game he got hurt in, and I told him, 'We'll be OK. We will be alright without you.' He looked up to me and said, 'Coach, I'll be there. Of course, he meant in spirit. And he really was."

Fitzgerald returned for his senior season as the Wildcats tied Ohio State for another Big Ten title, copping back-to-back national defensive player of the year honors as Northwestern's Cinderella run continued.

"He was a heady player with great instincts and fundamentally was one of the best linebackers I have ever coached," said Penn State linebackers coach Ron Vanderlinden, who coached Fitzgerald at NU. "Pat played with tremendous passion and a relentless resolve. He also was a natural leader."

After graduation, Fitzgerald worked his way up through the assistant's ranks at several schools, returning to his alma mater in 2001 as an assistant on Randy Walker's staff. Walker died suddenly in July, 2006, and Fitzgerald became the youngest head coach in major-college football.

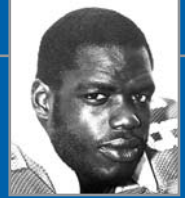


2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



WILBER MARSHALL, LINEBACKER 1980-83, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

- **Two-Time Consensus All-America in 1982-83**
- **Only one of five players in Florida's Ring of Honor**
- **Third Gator football player to be named All-SEC three times**



The University of Florida football program was hardly thriving in the late 1970s. Coach Doug Dickey's final two seasons of 6-4-1 in 1977 and 4-7 in 1978 ended his coaching career. Then the Coach Charley Pell era began with a disastrous 0-10-1 record in 1979. Over the course of those three seasons, the Gators were 1-5 against chief rivals Florida State and Miami, Fla., and failed to go to any bowl.

Call him the turnaround kid, but once linebacker Wilber Marshall stepped on the field as a freshman in the 1980 season things began to change in Gainesville. Over a four-year period, Marshall's class went to four straight bowls: Tangerine, Peach, Bluebonnet and

Gator. The Gators were 32-15-1 in his four seasons and beat Florida State three times.

Because he wanted to stick close to home, Marshall selected the University of Florida, which was located a car ride of 100 miles away from his small hometown of Mims near Florida's East Coast. Marshall, a tight end, linebacker and kicker in high school, quickly became a centerpiece in the rejuvenated Gator program as he unloaded on SEC defenses with his relentless tackling style, ranging from sideline to sideline.

In 1981, as a sophomore, Marshall really began his tackle parade, setting school records for sacks in a season (11) and tackles for loss in season (27). The Gators finished 7-5 and went to a second straight bowl. Marshall earned the first of three straight All-SEC first-team honors and an All-America honorable mention.

Early in the 1982 season during the Gator 17-9 upset of Southern California in Gainesville, Marshall arrived on national scene with 14 tackles, four of which were sacks against the Trojans. As a result, he claimed *Sports Illustrated* and Associated Press Defensive Player of the Week honors, eventually becoming a consensus All-America in 1982.

In 1983, as a senior, he repeated as a consensus All-America as Florida completed a 9-2-1 record, including a 19-19 tie with USC in Los Angeles in the return game. The Gators' only losses that season were 28-21 at Auburn and 10-9 to Georgia in back-to-back games. Florida defeated Iowa 14-6 in the Gator Bowl to finish as the sixth ranked team in both major polls.

His career totals at Florida included four defensive records: sacks in a season (11), tackles for loss in a season (27), sacks in a career (23) and tackles for loss in a career (58). He has since been passed by several players in sacks in a career and sacks in a season, but still holds the other two records. In four years in Gainesville, Marshall made 343 tackles, 210 unassisted.

Selected in the first round of the 1984 NFL Draft by the Chicago Bears, Marshall played 12 seasons in the NFL and was a three-time All-Pro Selection. He played on two Super Bowl winning teams, the Bears in 1985 and the Washington Redskins in 1991.

Marshall, who was inducted into Florida Ring of Honor in 2007, is involved with the National Kidney Foundation and Organ Donor Awareness and lives in Sterling, Va.



RUEBEN MAYES, RUNNING BACK 1982-85, WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

- **Twice named Pac-10 Offensive Player of the Year**
- **First Cougar to notch two 1,000-yard rushing seasons**
- **Set 15 school records during career**
- **Rushed for 3,519 yards at Washington State**



One of the greatest rushing performances in college football history was recorded by a running back from North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada: Washington State's Rueben Mayes.

When Mayes rushed for 357 yards on 39 carries against Oregon in 1984, he registered the most yards in a major-college contest in the history of the game at that point. His performance came in a wild, 50-41 victory at Oregon on Oct. 27, 1984. Nearly 25 years later, it still rates as one of the Top 10 rushing performances of all-time.

In fact, Mayes still owns the Pac-10 record for rushing yards in a game and also over a two-game period (573 yards). He had 216 yards the previous week in Washington State's 49-42 victory over Stanford as the Cougars rallied from a 28 points deficit.

"The Stanford game really ignited our team," Mayes said. "I had been injured the year before (as a sophomore) and I really worked hard heading into my junior season. We had a great game as a team against Stanford. And against Oregon, we had to run the ball because it was so wet. We ran the draw a ton, and we kept getting yards. I didn't realize how many yards I had until the end of the game."

Mayes' 357 yards topped the previous major college record of 356 yards by Eddie Lee Ivey of Georgia Tech against Air Force in 1978. Mayes' record would stand five seasons until Indiana's Anthony Thompson romped for 377 yards against Wisconsin in the 1989 season.

Over a four-year career, Mayes amassed more than 3,500 yards rushing and held Washington State's single-season rushing mark of 1,637 yards (in 1984) until Jerome Harrison broke the Cougars' mark in 2005. Although Washington State failed to go to a bowl during Mayes' career, the Cougars did beat arch-rival Washington in three of his four seasons, including a 21-20 decision his senior season in a game dubbed the "Ice Bowl." The Cougars won when Washington failed on a two-point conversion late in the game.

"One of my fondest memories at Washington State was beating the Huskies in the Apple Cup my senior year," Mayes said. "The culmination of my final game as collegiate athlete and the history behind the game made for a memorable experience. It was also really cold. I will never forget that."

Mayes' other good fortune in his last collegiate game was future New Orleans Saints' head coach Jim

Mora watching from the broadcast booth. Mora drafted Mayes in the third round of the 1986 Draft, and Mayes became the 1986 NFL Rookie of the Year, played in two Pro Bowls as a Saint and finished his NFL career with the Seattle Seahawks in 1993. He is now regional director of development for the Sacred Heart Medical Center Foundation in Springfield, Oregon.

"I am completely humbled to have been selected for this prestigious honor and represent Washington State," Mayes said. "It means a lot to me and my family. My wife, Marie... and my two sons, Logan and Kellen, were very excited about the award. This school means a lot to me, not only for my athletic career, but also for my professional career. A lot of people helped me along the way from high school and college coaches to mentors at a number of different levels."



2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



RANDALL MCDANIEL, OFFENSIVE GUARD 1984-87, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

- **Two Time First Team All-America**
- **Won Morris Trophy as Pac-10's Top Offensive Lineman in 1986**
- **Started 39 consecutive games for the Sun Devils and is a member of ASU's All-Century Team**



Randall McDaniel was possibly one of the best athletes to ever enroll at Arizona State University in the mid 1980s. At 6-foot-3, he played center on the high school basketball team, tight end in football and was a sprinter in track at Agua Fria High School in Avondale, Ariz., a suburb of Phoenix.

"I didn't start playing football until I was a freshman in high school," McDaniel said. "Before that I was mainly a baseball and basketball guy. In my day, you wanted to play all the sports. So I started football and track when I got to high school."

When McDaniel got to Arizona State, he became an offensive lineman. His sophomore season Coach John Cooper arrived, and the Sun Devils went to three straight bowl games.

"Randall McDaniel was one of the very best

players I coached while at Arizona State, and one of the best I've ever had a chance to coach," said John Cooper, who coached at Arizona State from 1985-87 and also is a member of the 2008 College Football Hall of Fame Class. "I always thought he would turn into a great player and he had a phenomenal college and professional career."

McDaniel, who would go on to a star-studded 14-year professional career with Minnesota and Tampa Bay that included 12 Pro Bowl invitations, didn't always believe that would happen when he was younger.

"When I was growing up I never imagined I'd get to play football for the Sun Devils or earn a college degree or have the chance to make a living playing the game I loved," McDaniel said. "When I stop and think about it now, it is still unbelievable to me. I'm just thankful my parents made me value education and hard work. I would never have had any of these opportunities."

At Arizona State, McDaniel anchored an offensive line that helped the Sun Devils to a 10-1-1 record in 1986, including a 22-15 victory over Michigan in the Rose Bowl.

"My all-time favorite memory from my time with the Sun Devils is beating Michigan in the 1987 Rose Bowl. We had amazing talent on that

team. What I really loved was that we had an offensive line made up of guys who were all (from) Arizona. That was really special."

Other starting offensive linemen on the Rose Bowl team were Danny Villa, Kevin Thomas, Todd Kalis and Jim Warne. Many of them went on to professional careers as did McDaniel, who now lives in Shorewood, Minn. McDaniel has created and currently works on "Team McDaniel," an after-school program to encourage community service by middle school students and the R.O.C.K (Reaching Out to Challenge Kids) Foundation, an umbrella organization for his many community initiatives.

"When I came home from work, there was a package from the Football Foundation," McDaniel said. "When I opened it, there was a football inscribed with my name with '2008 College Football Hall of Fame Class.' At first I just stared at it trying to believe what it said. Over the years, other people would comment on how they thought I should be in the College Football Hall of Fame, but you never expect it to happen to you....It's always difficult for an offensive lineman to receive an individual award. I know the only way you succeed in the trenches is to have five guys working on every play."



DON MCPHERSON, QUARTERBACK 1984-87, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

- **Won the Maxwell, Davey O'Brien and Johnny Unitas awards in 1987**
- **Second in the Heisman balloting in 1987**
- **Set 22 Syracuse individual football records**



Prior to Don McPherson's arrival on the football team at Syracuse with Coach Dick MacPherson, the Orange finished 2-9 as an independent in 1982. By the end of his senior campaign, the Orange were vying for the national title and finished No. 4 in both major polls with an 11-0-1 record during their 1987 season.

"Before school even started my freshmen year in 1984, I was in a (knee) cast, and when I finally did get on the field my sophomore year I separated my shoulder," McPherson said. "I actually thought of transferring out of Syracuse, I was so miserable at one point.To think I would be sitting here, much less having the kind of career I had and the kind of seasons that followed. I never would have imagined (it)."

Included in that magical 1987 season was a thrilling 32-31 victory over West Virginia in the final regular-season game. Despite throwing four interceptions, Don McPherson led the Orange on the winning drive late in the game and completed a touchdown pass to tight end Pat Kelly to bring them within a point of West Virginia. The Orange then secured the victory with a two-point conversion when McPherson handed

off to running back Michael Owens.

The Hempstead, N.Y., native, completed 129 of 229 passes for 2,341 yards and 22 TDs in 1987. Additionally, he ran for 531 yards and another four TDs. His pass efficiency rating as a senior was a sterling 164.3, which led the nation. McPherson culminated his college career with MVP honors in the 1988 Sugar Bowl, with Auburn when the War Eagles elected to kick a field goal in the late going for the 16-16 tie.

McPherson's leadership obviously was a catalyst in jump-starting the Syracuse as the Orange, following his departure (under MacPherson and later Coach Paul Pasqualoni) went to 11 bowls in the next 14 seasons and won nine of them.

"I can honestly tell you the game of football has given me more than I have given it. I am tremendously indebted to players, coaches, administrators. I look at the list of names (of nominees for the College Football Hall of Fame) — I am impressed. When it came out, I thought there was no way I would get in.... When I see my name on there, that is the name on my bills. That's the name on my address. It is not that impressive."

McPherson, selected in the sixth round of the 1988 NFL Draft by the Philadelphia Eagles, played four years in the NFL and retired in 1994 after a stint in the Canadian Football League. He founded the Sports Leadership Institute at Adelphi University and has become a leading advocate of the prevention of men's violence against women. He has appeared on "Nightline" and the "Oprah Winfrey Show."

"The journey I was on leading up to my years at Syracuse University and since was a very difficult one, a very long one," McPherson said. "And the journey I have been on since has been working with young people and the tremendous lessons and messages I have been able to deliver because of the game of football: perseverance, teamwork and togetherness."



2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



JAY NOVACEK, TIGHT END 1982-84, UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

- Still holds NCAA record for passing yardage per catch for a tight end (22.6 yards)
- Inducted into inaugural Wyoming Athletics Hall of Fame Class in 1993
- Amassed 1,536 yards receiving during college in a wishbone offense



Jay Novacek took an unlikely route to the College Football Hall of Fame. Born in Martin, South Dakota, and reared in rural central Nebraska (Gothenburg), Novacek played college football and participated in track and field at the University of Wyoming, far from the bright lights of college football citadels such as Columbus, Austin or Los Angeles.

In the early 1980s, getting to Laramie, Wyoming, to see Novacek wasn't always easy for scouts. Flight connections were difficult and airport rental cars often could not be found on football weekends. But scouts still came to see the promising Novacek in action.

He looked more like a big, tall wide receiver," said

Gil Brandt, formerly vice president of Player Personnel for the Dallas Cowboys. "He was very adept at getting open on the goal line and catching passes on the goal line." Novacek played split end early in his Wyoming career for Coach Al Kincaid's wishbone offense and then moved to tight end. Over three seasons he had 83 receptions for 1,536 yards and 10 touchdowns.

"He was rather tall and lanky when he was here," said Kevin McKinney, now a senior associate athletic director at Wyoming and radio color commentator. "He started putting on weight when he was in Dallas (6-4 232 pounds)...I have been around here for 40 years and I would probably have to say, if he is not the best athlete, he is close to the best athlete we have ever had."

"I always had respect for him all through college," said Rany Welniak, a Wyoming quarterback during that era. "We all knew he was a special individual as a person and athletically. He was an exceptional athlete. It was amazing I would throw to him in practice and anything around him, he would go up and get. He was just a very smooth, athletic guy. He was the type who

was down to earth, really kind of a farm kid from a smaller town in Nebraska."

Somewhat because of his obscurity at Wyoming and lack of flashy numbers, Novacek was selected in the sixth round of the 1985 NFL Draft by the then St. Louis Cardinals. He played five seasons with the Cardinals before becoming a Dallas Cowboy in 1990 as Plan B Free Agent. In Dallas, he became a star and one of the cogs in the Cowboys' three Super Bowl championships in 1992, '93 and '95 with Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin. Novacek played in five Pro Bowls from 1991-95.

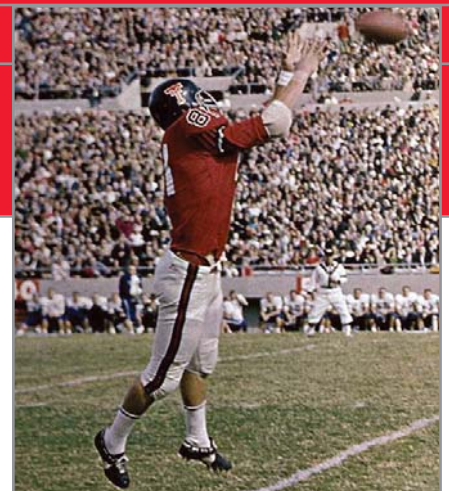
"This isn't something that you expect from a skinny tight end on a Wyoming team that ran the wishbone offense, but it is a great honor and very meaningful," Novacek said of going into the College Football Hall of Fame. "I am proud to be going in with my teammate and friend, Troy Aikman."

In 1997, he returned to his roots to run the Upper 84 Ranch in Brady, Nebraska, guiding hunting trips on his 3,500-acre spread. He also operates football camps for kids across the country.



DAVE PARKS, SPLIT END 1961-63, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

- First player in Texas Tech history named First-Team All-America by the Associated Press
- Twice Named All-Southwest Conference and the team's MVP
- Still owns Texas Tech longest interception return at 98 yards



Texas Tech's eventual All-America split end Dave Parks was told by one junior high coach he didn't need to show up for high school football practice in Abilene, Texas, in the mid 1950s.

"He said, 'They will just use you as a blocking dummy,'" Parks recalled more than 50 years later. "I didn't have anything else going on. I thought I will just go and try it and become a substitute on the last team. I never looked the part. I had not bulked any. I was just a wiry kid, real green. But they knew I wanted to play and coaches kept finding a place for me."

Parks convinced the freshman coach at Abilene High that he could punt better than a player already on the team. Once in the Abilene program, he started training with barbells (iron rods with cement cans on the ends), climbing rope and running. By his junior season, he was a fixture as starter for legendary Abilene coach Chuck Moser.

That was the start of great football career, which included three seasons at Texas Tech, being the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft, and a 10-year stay in the NFL with the San Francisco 49ers, New Orleans Saints and Houston Oilers. He

played in three straight Pro Bowls from 1964-66. To this day, Parks credits his high school coaches for preparing him.

"Coach Moser and his staff they were so prepared in everything we did, and he had a great program," Parks said. "I didn't know how good it was until I got up to Tech. I was looking at the other players at Texas Tech, and I thought I better buck it up a little. But I knew more...I had had the coaching... I got the basics in high school."

Parks could have attended any of the Southwest Conference schools, but Texas Tech coach J.T. King promised a wide-open offense—bait for a hungry pass-catcher such as the 6-foot-2, 202-pound Parks. "I went to Tech because they were going to throw the ball," Parks said. "We needed a big line and big throwers. He wanted to put it together, but didn't get it all going."

In Parks' three varsity seasons, Texas Tech compiled records of 4-6 (1961), 1-9 (1962) and 5-5 (1963). In his junior season, only his Red Raider record 98-yard interception return allowed Texas Tech to avoid a winless season with a 21-12 victory over Colorado.

"It was kind of funny," Parks said of the return.

"It knocked us out of the top spot in the Bottom 10. I had never paid any attention to it. We had gone through seven quarterbacks that season."

During his senior year at Texas Tech, Parks played with a broken wrist in a hard cast most of the season. He is most noted for a spectacular catch in a 10-0 victory over Texas A&M when he beat two defenders by diving across the goal line, somersaulting and holding the ball over his head. (It is currently available on YouTube.) Parks, who now resides in Dallas and invented the "Speedy Weedy," a lawn and garden tool that he manufactures and sells, said everybody his age says they were at the game.

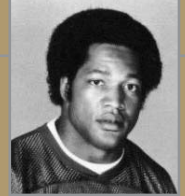


2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



RON SIMMONS, NOSE GUARD 1977-1980, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

- **First Seminole defender to have his jersey retired in 1988**
- **Two-time Consensus First Team All-America in 1979 and 1980**
- **Ninth in the 1979 Heisman Trophy balloting**



rallied the Seminoles. In his first game, a 35-14 Florida State victory over North Texas State, Simmons was named National Lineman of the Week. He finished his freshman season with 128 tackles and 13 for losses. The Seminoles finished 10-2, making a five-game improvement over the previous season and beating Texas Tech in the Tangerine Bowl. Simmons was the *Football News* freshman lineman of the year.

In 1978, as a sophomore, Simmons recorded 128 tackles again, nine for losses, in an 8-3 Florida State season. He was first team All-South Independent for the first of three straight seasons as the Seminoles won their last four games, including their second straight victory over arch rival Florida, 38-21.

In 1979 and 1980, Simmons became the first Seminole to earn consensus All-America honors twice, and the Seminoles developed into as a true national power, playing Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl both seasons. Florida State finished among the Top Six teams in the country each of those seasons, compiling records of 11-1 in 1979 (losing only to the Sooners), and 10-2 in 1980 (falling only to the Sooners again and to Miami, Fla.) Florida State beat Florida four straight seasons while Simmons was suited up for the Seminoles.

"When I was notified about [going into the Hall], I couldn't believe it was true, because normally when honors like these are bestowed on you, it's usually late in your life or sometimes after you're dead," Simmons said. "At this point in life I am able to enjoy it. It's a great honor. Out of the millions of young men who have played college football, to be chosen among such a select few, it's unbelievable. The fact that they considered me worthy just to be in the College Hall of Fame is a dream come true."

Simmons set school records for sacks in a career and a season at the time he played. He was ninth in the Heisman Trophy balloting as a junior. He still ranks second on Florida State's all-time tackle list (483) and career tackles for loss (44). He has previously been inducted into the Florida State Football of Fame and the Orange Bowl Hall of Fame.

Drafted in the sixth round of the 1981 NFL Draft by the Cleveland Browns, he later played two seasons for the Tampa Bay Bandits of the United States Football League before launching a 20-year professional wrestling career under the name Faarooq and winning the WCW World Heavyweight Championship. A semi-retired wrestler, he lives in Marietta, Ga.

Florida State coach Bobby Bowden became coach of the Seminoles in 1976 with a mission to turn around a program that had suffered through a 4-29 malaise the previous three seasons under two different head coaches.

Bowden's first season wound up 5-6 when Florida State won its last three games against Southern Mississippi, North Texas State and Virginia Tech by a combined 11 points. The difference between 5-6 and 2-9 was not that great. Then, in 1977, Ron Simmons – a freshman from Warner Robins, Ga., arrived in Tallahassee. It didn't take Bowden long to figure out what was happening. "Simmons is turning the program around," said Bowden.

From the very beginning, No. 50 was an eye-popping 6-foot-1, 235-pound standout nose guard who



THURMAN THOMAS, RUNNING BACK 1984-87, OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

- **Two-time First Team All-America in 1985 (Consensus) and 1987**
- **Two-time Big 8 Offensive Player of Year in 1985 and 1987**
- **Rushed for 100 or more yards 21 times**
- **His No. 34 is one of three numbers retired at the school**



Thurman Thomas amassed 4,595 rushing yards and 44 touchdowns at Oklahoma State, catapulting him into the school and conference record books while putting Stillwater, Okla., on the college football map in the mid 1980s.

"Thurman has always been a great competitor," said current Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy, who played in the same Cowboy backfield as Thomas for two seasons. "He kind of set the stage here. I know (former OSU All-America running backs) Ernest Anderson and Terry Miller came before him, but Thurman really grabbed national attention and he brought a lot of attention to Oklahoma State when he played in the NFL.

"I remember more about him in practice than I do in games because he was such a leader in practice... He was very competitive in practice. That is what separated him from other players."

During his four seasons at Oklahoma State, Thomas led the Cowboys in rushing each season, and propelled them to three bowls and two 10-2 records. He was a workhorse for Coach Pat Jones before embarking on a 13-year professional career.

"Had it not been for you (Jones) rushing me over those four years, 30 to 40 and sometimes 40 to 50 times I might

have played more than 13 years," Thomas kiddingly chided his old coach. "Thank you for having faith in me in my last two years because there was another talented running back who played at Oklahoma State, Barry Sanders."

"With the exception of winning the Heisman Trophy, he won just about every away you could win," said Jones, who also coached Thomas with the Miami Dolphins at the tail end of his professional career. "He is probably the toughest physically I have been around at any level."

Thomas, from Missouri City, Texas, burst upon the scene as a solid freshman tailback in 1984, then really starred as a sophomore in 1985 when he posted 1,553 yards rushing, fourth best in the country. Between his sophomore and junior seasons he suffered a tear to his ACL in his left knee, missing some games during the 1986 season. His rushing total dipped, and the Cowboys dropped to 6-5.

He bounced back his senior season, rushing for 1,613 yards and finishing third nationally in rushing for a 10-2 Cowboys team. From 1984-87, Thomas carried the ball a remarkable 898 times for the Cowboys, the most rushing attempts in a career in Oklahoma State history.

Thomas capped his college career on a snowy day in El

Paso in the 1987 Sun Bowl. "That game we played in the Sun Bowl where the conditions were terrible and he was MVP is the game I remember more than any," Gundy said. In that game, Thomas rushed for 157 yards and four touchdowns on 33 carries in a come-from behind 35-33 victory over West Virginia.

The Buffalo Bills second round pick in the 1988 NFL Draft, Thomas played in the NFL for 13 seasons, appearing in four Super Bowls and five straight Pro Bowls. He retired in 2000 after one final season with the Miami Dolphins. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2007.

Residing in East Aurora, N.Y., he owns and operates "Thurman Thomas Sports," a training center dedicated to helping athletes of all ages and reach their maximum potential.



2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



ARNOLD TUCKER, QUARTERBACK 1944-46, UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

- Quarterbacked Army teams to a 27-0-1 record and three national titles
- Set the Army single-season interception record with eight grabs his senior season of 1946
- Won the Sullivan Award as America's top amateur athlete in 1946



Outland Trophy winner Joe Steffy, a guard, remembers one of Army back Arnold Tucker's greatest games, the legendary 0-0 tie against Notre Dame in 1946 at Yankee Stadium. Only it wasn't on offense where Tucker made his mark in that game between No. 1 Army and No. 2 Notre Dame. It was on defense.

"When we played Notre Dame to a scoreless tie on defense he intercepted three passes and Notre Dame came out in the second half and didn't throw the ball," Steffy said. "He had intercepted three passes and Johnny Lujack, the Notre Dame quarterback, decided they were not going to throw it. Arnold Tucker scared the Notre Dame coach Frank Leahy to death. Lujack was their quarterback and he could throw it any time they wanted him to throw it. Well, he couldn't against Army that year."

Steffy, inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame

in 1987, is one of 27 Army players or coaches to precede Tucker into the Hall. It may have been a case where Tucker got lost in the galaxy of stars on those great Army teams, which included Heisman Trophy winners, halfback Glenn Davis and fullback Doc Blanchard, and Steffy.

Tucker, who was elected into the Hall through the NFF's Honors Review Committee, is the sixth person associated with those mid-1940s Army teams to be inducted. Army coach Earl "Red" Blaik and end Barney Poole previously were inducted into the Hall along with Blanchard, Davis and Steffy.

"He should have been in a long time ago," Steffy said. "He was a quarterback on three national title teams. That alone should have put him in there. It was a situation where he fell through the cracks....Blanchard and Davis got all the publicity."

Tucker, a native of the South Florida region and a current Miami area resident, actually played one season at the University of Miami before Army. After graduation and flight training, he returned to Army as an assistant backfield coach. He later had a long career in the Army and Air Force, serving as the Deputy Chief of Operations for the 5th Air Force in Japan and Commanding Officer of the 16th Special

Operations Squadron in Thailand. Before retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 1976, Tucker held an assistant athletics director position at the University of Miami, running the school's ROTC program.

Army was 9-0 in 1944, and 9-0 again in 1945. In 1944, Army outscored opponents 504-35. And in 1945, the Black Knights of the Hudson had a 412-46 scoring advantage. The team was a juggernaut.

In 1946, when Tucker was a senior, Army had one of the toughest schedules in the country with Oklahoma, Michigan, Notre Dame and Navy. The Cadets finished 9-0-1, including the tie against Notre Dame at Yankee Stadium. It was the third straight unbeaten season for Army and Tucker.

"Colonel Red Blaik at the Military Academy had the biggest influence," Tucker said of his football career. "When we used to have periods of reviewing film of games and preparing for the next opponent, Col. Blaik personally tutored the quarterbacks... Col. Blaik personally praised all of us and I certainly benefited from that experience. Col. Blaik had a great understanding of the strategies of the game."

Although it took 62 years after his playing days, Tucker has finally made the College Football Hall of Fame.



SALUTES

ARNOLD TUCKER

QUARTERBACK 1944-46

THREE-TIME NATIONAL CHAMPION

FIRST-TEAM ALL-AMERICAN (1946)

SULLIVAN AWARD (1946)

ON BECOMING THE 27TH ARMY PLAYER OR COACH TO GAIN ENTRANCE INTO THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL FOUNDATION COLLEGE

FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

AND

ANDREW RODRIGUEZ

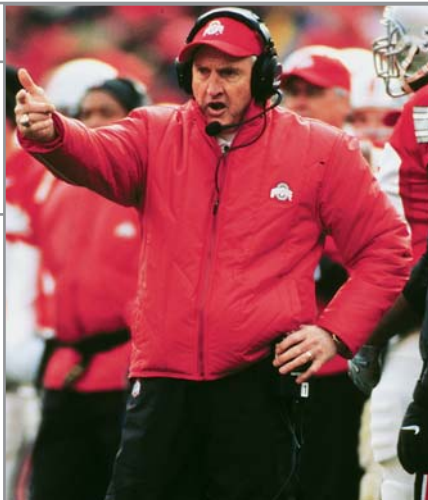
THE 2008 EAST REGION HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE YEAR





2008 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



JOHN COOPER, TULSA (1977-84), ARIZONA STATE (1985-87), OHIO STATE (1988-2000)

- **First and only coach to lead teams from both Pacific-10 and Big Ten to Rose Bowl victories**
- **Led teams to bowl games 14 times in 24 seasons**
- **At the three schools, Cooper's teams won or shared nine conference championships**



John Cooper's blue print to becoming a coaching legend began as a high school player in Powell, Tenn., a Knoxville suburb. It extended through a stint in the U.S. Army, his college football playing days at Iowa State and assistantships with the Cyclones, Oregon State, UCLA, Kansas and Kentucky. He rubbed coaching elbows with many great head coaches, including Tommy Prothro at UCLA, Pepper Rodgers at Kansas and Fran Curci at Kentucky.

In 1977, Tulsa gave him a head coaching break, and

he suffered just one losing season before turning the program around. He had just one other losing mark — his first season at Ohio State — in nearly a quarter-century of head coaching.

"My high school football coach told me once, 'John I think you will be a great football coach some day,' Cooper said. "He planted the seed in my head. Until that time, I didn't have a goal. When I got out of high school, I would get a job and get whatever job I could get. I found the prettiest girl in high school (his wife, Helen) the prettiest cheerleader, and found I could do a pretty good job recruiting her. And she told me if we got married, I had to go to college. My dad was a carpenter and I was one of six kids. And the only way I could go to college was get a football scholarship."

Cooper formulated his coaching philosophy at Tulsa, dominating the Missouri Valley Conference with the split-back veer and posting a 56-32 record. Tulsa would play bigger-named teams on the road for large pay-days, posting wins against Florida, Texas Tech, Air Force, Kansas State and Virginia Tech, and he won or shared five straight MVC titles from 1980-84. Following time in Tulsa, his three-year

stint at Arizona State produced a 25-9-2 record where he won a Pac-10 title and captured a Rose Bowl victory over Michigan, 22-15, after the 1986 season.

Starting in 1988, over 13 seasons, Cooper compiled a 111-43-4 record as his Buckeye teams tied for three Big Ten titles and posted five 10-win seasons. "In the mid 1990s, we were pretty good (at Ohio State)," Cooper said. "The best feeling you can have is when you are on the field before the game and you are watching the other team warm up, and you are out there visiting with the other head coach, and you look at their players and you know, 'We are going to kick your butt today'....You win with people."

He wound up eight victories shy of 200 (the NCAA excludes a forfeit Cooper includes in his record) during his tenure at the three schools. He considered another head coaching job to get to 200 wins, but his younger brother dissuaded him. The former AFCA President settled in Columbus near his children and grandchildren. He keeps close tabs on the Buckeyes from an office provided by Ohio State and works as an ESPN football analyst.



LOU HOLTZ, WILLIAM & MARY (1969-71), NORTH CAROLINA STATE (1972-75), ARKANSAS (1977-83), MINNESOTA (1984-85), NOTRE DAME (1986-96), SOUTH CAROLINA (1999-2004)

- **Only coach in NCAA history to lead six different programs to bowl games**
- **Led Notre Dame to 1988 National Championship and to nine straight New Year's Day bowl games from 1987-95**
- **Directed his Arkansas teams to six straight bowls from 1977-82**

ESPN commentator Lou Holtz, also a motivational speaker and author, could wear colors of six different schools when he is inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

But Holtz, the bespectacled 71-year-old, may be most remembered for his quick wit and his 11-year stay under the Golden Dome, where he won 100 games and led the Fighting Irish to their most recent national championship in 1988. In only his third season at Notre Dame, the Fighting Irish defeated West Virginia, 34-21 in the Fiesta Bowl, capping a 12-0 season.

Holtz completed a turnaround at Notre Dame, which had seen the Fighting Irish recover from two straight 5-6 seasons, including his first in South Bend in 1986. The next season, Notre Dame and Heisman Trophy Winner Tim Brown went to the Cotton Bowl, before Holtz made his big breakthrough.

"You dream about it, but I never thought it would happen to me," Holtz said after beating West Virginia. "I never thought I would coach a national championship team. It still hasn't sunk in."

The victory over West Virginia was especially significant to Holtz because he was born in Follansbee, West Virginia, during the depression era of the 1930s. But

the family moved and Holtz grew up in Liverpool, Ohio, and he later played college football at Kent State. He has been on the move ever since.

"When reality set in, I said, 'How did this happen?' Holtz recalled of when he heard he was going to be inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. "I wasn't a great athlete. I was from a small town. There are just so many people, you think, how in the world was I fortunate enough?"

A journeyman assistant in the 1960s after playing college football, Holtz got his head coaching break at William & Mary in 1969. He won a Southern Conference title in 1970, which, a year later, prompted a move to North Carolina State. With the Wolfpack, Holtz compiled a 33-12-3 record, going to four bowls in four seasons. Then it was on to Arkansas where the Razorbacks advanced to six straight bowls and crushed Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl, 31-6, finishing No. 3 nationally in the 1977 season.

Holtz, who won national coach of the year honors at Arkansas and Notre Dame, spent two seasons at Minnesota, turning the moribund Gophers into a bowl-bound team (Independence Bowl in 1985) before accepting the Notre Dame job.



"The thing we don't think about is the sacrifice your family makes when it is in coaching," Holtz said. "We moved 16 different times, and (his wife Beth) never complained once. I would be gone recruiting and she would always be supportive."

Holtz spent two seasons as a CBS commentator in 1997 and 1998, before coming out of retirement for his sixth head job at South Carolina. After an 0-11 inaugural season in 1999, Holtz took the Gamecocks to two bowls in the next five seasons through 2004, winning both of those games against Ohio State in the Outback Bowls during the 2000 and 2001 seasons.

Holtz, who has won 249 games, said he talked to a BCS school after the 2007 season and was tempted about an opening. But he's probably through coaching, although not commentating. "I never want to be retired because you never get a day off," Holtz quipped.