



OKLAHOMA HERITAGE Association  
GAYLORD-PICKENS Museum

# HERITAGE TIMES

Telling Oklahoma's Story Through Its People

GENEROSITY • INDIVIDUALISM • OPTIMISM • PERSEVERANCE • PIONEER SPIRIT

In **Lesson 3** students will explore some of the personalities that have played a role in Oklahoma's sports history.

## Featured Oklahomans

Hubert Ausbie  
Abe Lemons  
Nancy Lopez  
Shannon Miller  
Allie Reynolds  
John Smith  
Michele Smith  
Warren Spahn  
Jim Thorpe  
Charles Wilkinson

### Warren Spahn

Spahn was stationed in Muskogee during World War II when he met and married his wife and decided to call Oklahoma home. He served in the U.S. Army, receiving a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star.

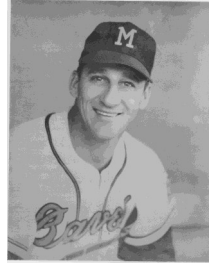
He played his first professional baseball game with the Boston Braves, then with the Milwaukee Braves, New York Mets, and the San Francisco Giants. Throughout his career in major league baseball, Spahn hit more home runs than any pitcher in his class and was named to the National League All-Stars fourteen times.

In 1957, when the Braves defeated the New York Yankees in the World Series, he received the Cy Young Award as best pitcher in all of baseball. His record as a left-handed pitcher includes most games won in the majors; most consecutive years leading a complete game; most lifetime games won; and most strike-outs. He was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973.

He came home to Oklahoma to manage the Tulsa Oilers from 1967 to 1971 before retiring to his 2,800-acre ranch near Hartshorne.

**Elementary Activity:** Draw the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. Explain why each is awarded.

**Secondary Activity:** Explore the number of baseball greats in the 1950s and 1960s who previously had served in the military.



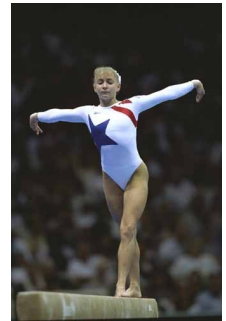
### Shannon Miller

An Edmond native, Miller began gymnastics at age five. As a 12-year-old, Shannon finished an impressive third at the 1989 Olympic Festival — a competition designed to showcase up-and-coming talent. Over the next two years, she added such difficulty to her routines that she soon had some of the hardest routines in the world.

Miller concluded her nearly 14-year career with an astounding seven Olympic medals and is recognized as the most-decorated gymnast in history. Miller is one of the most accomplished American athletes in any sport.

**Elementary Activity:** Draw the Olympic medal and explain the significance of the rings.

**Secondary Activity:** What other Oklahomans have earned Olympic medals? In what competitions?



### Abe Lemons

Born in Walters, Lemons worked his way through high school and landed a basketball scholarship at Southwestern State Teachers College in Weatherford.

He served in the Merchant Marine during World War II and came to Oklahoma City University after the war ended. He was a star player and became an assistant basketball coach after graduation. He was named head coach at OCU in

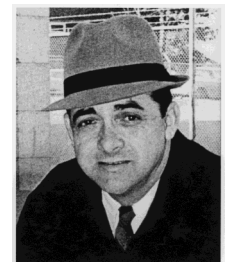
1955 and built the Chiefs into a major college basketball powerhouse for the next 18 years.

In 1973, Abe moved to Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas for three seasons and made the Broncs the leading independent basketball team in the Southwest. Abe became head coach at the University of Texas in 1976, winning the Southwest Conference his second season and the NIT in 1978. He returned to OCU and re-

tired in 1990 with 599 wins.

**Elementary Activity:** Calculate the mileage of Lemons career beginning with his home town.

**Secondary Activity:** Create a timeline of Abe Lemons career.



**Words of Wisdom**  
**from the**  
**Oklahoma Hall**  
**of Fame**

*“Doctors bury their mistakes, ours are still on scholarship.”*

**-Abe Lemons**  
 Inducted 1999

*“I saw some of the greats in my early years...I grew up idolizing those players, and I never got over the thrill of being in the same game they played...We felt an obligation – a duty to each other, and we loved the game. That was my kind of baseball.”*

**-Warren Spahn**  
 Inducted 1993

*“I would put Bud Wilkinson along with Will Rogers and Jim Thorpe in what they have done to bring national attention to Oklahoma. Bud was a great man.”*

**-George Nigh**  
 Inducted 1989

## John Smith

Smith compiled a 105-5 record at Del City High School before moving to Oklahoma State University, where he had a 154-7-2 collegiate record and two NCAA Championships.

He was a three-time All-America selection at OSU. Internationally, Smith had a 100-5 career record that included six world championships, two Olympic gold medals, two Pan American Games gold medals, and two Goodwill Games gold medals. Smith remains the only collegiate wrestler to win a world championship while he was still in school. Smith holds Oklahoma State school

records for career victories, single-season victories, career falls, and single-season falls. A three-time Big 8 Conference individual champion, he wrestled primarily at 134 lbs. during his collegiate career with a 69-3 overall record. At 126 lbs. he was 19-2. He won his only career match at 142.

Smith became head wrestling coach at OSU in 1992. With more than 250 wins to date, he also was head coach of the USA Olympic Wrestling team, has been named NCAA Champion Coach five times, and is a seven-time Big 12 Coach of the Year.

**Elementary Activity:** Map out the states that make up the Big 12 conference.

**Secondary Activity:** Compare the overall records of the 134 lb. weight class for all Big 12 schools during the last season. Explore the trends, commonalities, and differences.



## Charles Burnham “Bud” Wilkinson

Wilkinson came to the University of Oklahoma in Norman as an assistant football coach before being named head coach.

Wilkinson led the Sooners to three national championships, 14 Big Seven and Big Eight Conference titles, and six New Year’s Day bowl victories while compiling record consecutive-victory strings of 31 games from 1948-1950 and 47 games in the 1953-1957 seasons.

In the years following his career at OU, Wilkinson ran for the U. S. Senate and served four years as the chairman of the board of Lifetime Sports Foundation. United States President John F. Kennedy named Wilkinson a Special Consultant to the President on the fitness of youth. He spent two seasons as head football coach of the St. Louis Cardinals and was the pre-game analyst for the college football telecasts on ABC, as well as color

commentator for the NCAA Game of the Week.

**Elementary Activity:** Draw a representation of Wilkinson’s coaching career at OU.

**Secondary Activity:** Who did Wilkinson run against in his bid for the United States Senate? What were the candidates’ platforms and the outcome?



## Nancy Lopez

Lopez began playing golf as a young girl and was an accomplished amateur before starting her professional career while a sophomore at the University of Tulsa. She was named Player of the Year by the Ladies Professional Golf Association four times and inducted into the PGA Hall of Fame when she was only 30.

Considered the greatest female golfer of her generation, she boasts 48 LPGA Tour wins, 3 LPGA major wins, and was named Rookie of the Year in 1978.

She earned the Vare Trophy

three times, was named Player of the Year four times, earned the Rolex Player of the Year Award four times, and was the LPGA leading money earner three years. She is the only player to win Rookie of the Year, Player of the Year, and the Vare Trophy in the same season—1978. She founded her own golf company in 1997.

In 2003, Lopez was named to *Hispanic Business Magazine’s* list of 80 Elite Hispanic Women and was presented with the Billie Jean King Contribution Award. In 2007 she won the ASAP Sports/Jim Murray

Award for her cooperation and allowing access by the media.



**Elementary Activity:** Draw a putting green in a unique shape.

**Secondary Activity:** Research and report on another Hispanic athlete from the State of Oklahoma.

## Allie Reynolds

Born in Bethany, Muscogee (Creek) Indian, Allie P. Reynolds graduated from Oklahoma City's Capitol Hill High School and was a track and football star at Oklahoma A&M (now OSU) in Stillwater before becoming one of the most dominant baseball pitchers of his era.

Known as "Super Chief," Reynolds' minister father would not let him play baseball on Sundays, so his baseball career began only after he was drafted for pro football. It did not pay well, so he took a

\$1,000 bonus to play baseball in the minor leagues in 1939.

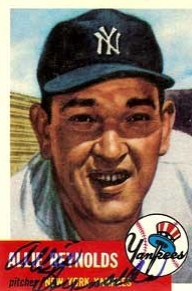
In 12 full seasons with the Cleveland Indians and New York Yankees, he won 182 regular season games and seven World Series championships. He was the first American leaguer to pitch two no-hitters in the same season and, in 1951, won the Hickok Belt as the outstanding professional athlete in America.

After his sports career, Allie returned to Oklahoma to the oil business. He was president of the minor league Class AAA

American Association and the primary organizer of Red Earth. **Elementary**

**Activity:** Chart Reynolds winning record in his full 12 seasons.

**Secondary Activity:** Many athletes turned to their communities following their careers, choose one and detail their contributions.



## Did you Know? from the Oklahoma Hall of Fame

Mickey Mantle was voted the most popular Yankee of all time and held the record for the most games played in a Yankees uniform, 2,401.

## Michele Smith

As one of the two top pitching recruits, Smith was awarded a full scholarship to Oklahoma State University. While at OSU she was named All-Time OSU Cowgirl, led the Nation in homeruns, pitched a school record of 707 games with 97 games started, 75 games completed, and 108 appearances. Her college career ended with a 80-20 win/loss record and 46 shutouts.

She earned Gold Medals as a member of the USA Olympic

Softball Team in the 1996 and 2000 Olympic games. With Team USA her Gold Medal finished also include the Canada Cup, ISF World Championship, Pan American Games, World Challenger Cup, Intercontinental Cup, and South Pacific Classic. Her career also included more than 10 years in the Japanese Pro League.

She is now the owner of Michele Smith, Inc. and offers her own line of equipment and

instructional camps, videos, and books.

**Elementary Activity:** Design a Team USA poster.

**Secondary Activity:** Explore the career choices of other athletes following their athletic careers.



Barry Switzer is among the "winningest" coaches in all of college football, leading the Sooners to three national championship wins, 12 Big Eight Conference crowns. He is one of only two coaches to ever win a national championship in college and the NFL.

## Hubert "Geese" Ausbie

Ausbie was born in Crescent and excelled in baseball, basketball, tennis, and track. He once scored 70 points in a high school basketball game and helped lead his team to four straight Oklahoma Basketball State Championships.

After graduating from high school, Ausbie accepted a basketball scholarship from Philander Smith College. Following a standout collegiate career, Ausbie joined the Harlem

Globetrotters basketball team after turning down a professional baseball contract with the Chicago Cubs and despite the interest of the NBA's Cincinnati Royals and Los Angeles Lakers.

For 24 years, he played for the Globetrotters in more than 100 countries and became



known as the "Clown Prince of Basketball" for his entertaining antics on the basketball court.

**Elementary Activity.** Locate Crescent on the Oklahoma map. How close is Crescent to the state's capital city?

**Secondary Activity:** Explore Ausbie's career as a Globetrotter. How many continents did he visit while playing with the team?

Allie Reynolds' minister father would not let him play baseball on Sundays.

Educational opportunities annually offered by the **Oklahoma Heritage Association** include:

- More than \$4,000,000 in scholarships to high school students.
- Heritage Week competitions for students in grades 3 through 12.
- Teen Board for students grades 9-12.
- Interactive Versus Series compare and contrast an Oklahoman from our past with his or her contemporary.
- Field trips to the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum—voted Nickelodeon’s Parents’ Choice Best Pick for Teens.
- “I Am Oklahoma” program for students of all ages.
- *Oklahoma: Magazine of the Oklahoma Heritage Association* is distributed to high school libraries statewide.

## Jim Thorpe

James Francis Thorpe was born in a one-room cabin near Prague. He was born to Hiram Thorpe, a farmer, and Mary James, a Pottawatomie Indian and descendant of the last great Sac and Fox chief Black Hawk, a noted warrior and athlete.

In 1904, Thorpe started school at Carlisle Industrial Indian School in Pennsylvania where he began his athletic career, playing football and running track. He was selected as an All-American three times. At 24, he participated in the 1912 Olympic Games in Belgium. He set records that would stand for decades in the pentathlon and decathlon events. King Gustav V of Sweden presented Thorpe with his gold medals and said “Sir, you are the greatest athlete in the world.” Thorpe replied “Thanks King.”

The following year, the Olympic Committee decided that his baseball experience adversely affected his amateur status in the track and field events. His name was removed from the record books and his gold medals were taken away. Thorpe had played two semi-professional seasons of baseball and argued that he played for the love of the game and not the money, but the decision stood.



Thorpe signed with the New York Giants and played outfield for three seasons before playing with the Cincinnati Reds. After 77 games as a Red, he returned to the Giants before playing his final season with the Boston Braves. During much of his time playing baseball, he played professional football with the Canton Bulldogs and the Cleveland Indians, among others, and playing his final season with the Chicago Cardinals. Thorpe organized, coached and played with the Oorang Indians, a professional football team of American Indians. He also was instrumental in forming the American Professional Football Association, eventually becoming its president. The Association was renamed the National Football League.

Thorpe worked as an extra in movies, served as superintendent of recreation in the Chicago Park System, and as a public speaker/lecturer. He formed an all-Indian song and dance troupe entitled “The Jim Thorpe Show” and even spent time in the Merchant Marines.

Following his death, Thorpe’s medals were finally returned to his family and his name and accomplishments were reinstated as part of Olympic history.

**Elementary Activity:** Explore what makes up the pentathlon and decathlon events.

**Secondary Activity:** What Oklahoma Olympians have records that still stand today?



[www.oklahomaheritage.com](http://www.oklahomaheritage.com)



### Comments/Questions:

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