



Robeson County Athletic Hall of Fame announces its first class

Twelve men and women were selected to the charter class of the Robeson County Athletic Hall of Fame.

Representing several eras, the first inductees were drawn from across the county and includes two professional baseball players, one National Football League star, four Atlantic Coast Conference greats, a Division I basketball coach, a former track and field record holder and more.

A 10-member board of directors has worked since May 2008 to organize the Hall of Fame.

Forty former athletes were nominated and all are deserving, said Abdul Ghaffar, chair of the 10-member board.

“We are proud to announce our inaugural class,” Ghaffar said. “This list is the culmination of a lot of hard work and some rather spirited discussions by our committee.

“Ultimately, we all walked out of the room pleased with this outstanding group,” added Ghaffar. The charter class will be inducted in an April 18 banquet.

Joe Brisson (deceased) - St. Pauls: volunteer, coach, mentor

- Coached recreation sports in St. Pauls for over 40 years
- St. Pauls Little League baseball field named in his honor
- Twice awarded Governor’s Community Service Volunteer Award for coaching recreation

Tom Cope (deceased) - Red Springs: volunteer, coach, mentor

- Recognized as “Mr. Baseball” for Red Springs
- Developed youth baseball programs as Red Springs athletic director in 1941

- Red Springs Little League park named in his honor

Rod Griffin – Fairmont, basketball player

- 1977 ACC basketball Player of the Year
- Led ACC in scoring and rebounding 1978
- Drafted 17th by Denver Nuggets in 1978 draft

Gene Locklear – Pembroke, professional baseball player

- Played in majors during five seasons for the Cincinnati Reds, San Diego Padres and N.Y. Yankees
- Career .274 batting average (595 major league at bats)
- Internationally-known artist

Dwight Lowry (deceased) – Pembroke, professional baseball player and coach

- Played ACC baseball at UNC Chapel-Hill (all-ACC)
- Played 108 games with Detroit Tigers (1984 World Series ring); .273 average
- Tigers established the Dwight Lowry Award for its Player Development Man of the Year

Nicky McKeithan – Lumberton: football player and golfer

- Running back/defensive back at Duke, starting on the 1955 ACC championship team
- Recorded a touchdown and interception in 1955 Orange Bowl leading Duke to a 34-6 win
- 10-time Robeson County golf champion

Lee McRae - Pembroke, track

- Two-time U.S. indoor track champion, 60m dash (1986-1987)
- World champion 4x100m relay
- 1986 NCAA champion, 100m

Regina Miller – Parkton, basketball player/coach

- Led Parkton to 1-A girls basketball Title
- Played on Louisburg College Jr. College national championship team and final four team at Old Dominion
- NCAA Division I head women's coach for 16 years including 10 years at UNLV

Eva Patterson-Heath - Red Springs: basketball player/coach/volunteer

- Over 495 wins at Red Springs with two trips to state championship game
- Played collegiately at NCA&T
- Helped to organize and coach girl's recreation basketball for Red Springs Recreation Department (20 years).

Ned Sampson – Pembroke: basketball player/coach

- Robeson County H.S. coach for 34 years/Robeson Little League baseball coach for 10 years
- Played basketball, football and baseball at Pembroke State College (now UNCP) where he is a charter member of the Hall of Fame

- Averaged 24 ppg. as a senior including scoring 40 points against Campbell College

Donnell Thompson – Lumberton, football player

- All-ACC defensive lineman at UNC-Chapel Hill
- Played 11 seasons (147 games) with Baltimore/Indianapolis Colts recording 40 sacks

Bob Van-Hoy - Red Springs: basketball/baseball coach

- Coached 1956 Red Springs High School to the 1-A baseball state title and the 1957 team to a state runner-up finish
- Coached Red Springs girls basketball team to nine county championships in 12 years
- Coached Red boys basketball team to three county championships

More information about the inductees can be found at www.angelelitesports.com.