



TENNESSEE SPORTS HALL OF FAME  
ANNOUNCES 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CLASS OF INDUCTEES

NASHVILLE, TN., Oct. 24, 2015 --- The Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame announced today the names of ten inductees plus a group of brothers to be enshrined at its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Induction Banquet on Saturday, June 17, 2016, at the Omni Nashville.

Announced inductees include posthumous inductions for Tennessee Titan great **Steve McNair** and Baylor Golf Coach **King Oehmig**. Additional inductees include **Conrad Graham**, University of Tennessee All-America defensive back; **Missy Kane**, University of Tennessee Middle Distance Runner and bronze medal Olympian; **Mike Taylor**, UT-Martin football player and current SEC football official; **Ernest Gray**, All-America wide-receiver from the University of Memphis and NFL star; **Mike Curb**, legend in automobile racing; **Joe Biddle**, longtime middle Tennessee sport writer; and **Lester McClain**, first African American football player at Tennessee.

The Hall also chose the football **Canale Brothers** from Memphis. In all, six brothers played football in the SEC at Tennessee (**George, Frank and Whit**) and Mississippi State (**Justin, Billy and Conn**)

In addition the Hall will induct Milligan College legend and coach **Duard Walker** as the Lifetime Achievement Inductee.

The Sports Hall of Fame, which held its first induction banquet in 1966, has as its goal to enshrine successful teams and individuals who display sportsmanship, good character and success, creating a legacy for others to follow. The Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame Museum is housed the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville.

The Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, a 501-C3 pays tribute to all those who have made an impact through sports in Tennessee. The Hall subscribes to the principle that sports serve society's highest ideals by educating youth through sports. It promotes the virtues of competition, fair play, friendship, solidarity, mutual understanding and respect for human dignity. The best way to honor our sports legends is to pass this legacy down to future generations.

**2016 Inductees into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame**

### **Joe Biddle- Media**

Joe Biddle is a Tennessee native, born in Johnson City where he graduated from Science Hill High School in 1962 and later East Tennessee State University in 1971. The Nashville Banner hired Biddle in 1979, where he became their sports editor and columnist until the afternoon paper folded in 1997. The Tennessean immediately hired him as a sports columnist. Biddle was also a co-host on local sports talk radio shows. He is a four-time winner of the Tennessee Sports Writer of the Year by the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters of America. During his career he covered 25 Super Bowls, 25 Masters as well as a number of NCAA Final Fours, World Series, SEC and national football championship games.

### **Canale Brothers-Football**

If college or professional football fans remember Whitfield “Whit” Canale or his brother Justin Canale, they probably live in the area surrounding Memphis, Tenn. Even as pro players, Whit briefly with the Dolphins and Patriots and Justin in a longer career with the Patriots, Bengals, and in the CFL and WFL, they were not stars, nor “name players,” yet held the respect of their teammates and those who knew them. From a family of athletes, the Canales have maintained a place in the history of Tennessee athletics that is enviable and extensive. With three brothers who played football for the University of Tennessee (Whit, Frank and George) and three more that played for Mississippi State University (Justin, Billy and Conn) there is a strong case to support the comment that “They are the greatest football family that ever came out of Memphis.”

### **Mike Curb-Auto Racing**

Not only is Mike Curb an icon in the music sector as the founder of Curb Records—celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as the oldest record label still owned by its original owner—and a paragon to students who attend Curb Colleges at universities across the country, he is also a known legend in the automobile racing industry. His special achievements in motorsports include over 400 auto racing victories in 25 different series, including winning the Indianapolis 500, winning in NASCAR at Daytona, over 1,000 Top 5 finishes, over 20 national championships, only car owner/entrant to win USAC Triple Crown (Silver Crown cars, Midget cars, Sprint cars) in the same year, and winning as an owner/entrant in all four NASCAR owned Major National Series (Sprint Cup – Richard Petty), Nationwide (Johnny Sauter), Camping World Trucks (Johnny Sauter), Grand-Am Rolex Daytona Prototype (Shank/Curb-Agajanian). Selected as a member of the West Coast Stock Car Hall of Fame.

### **Conrad Graham- Football**

Conrad Graham was a three-year starter in Tennessee's secondary during a time which the Vols boasted one of the best pass-coverage defenses in history. Three of the defensive backfield members earned All-America status, including Graham his senior year of 1972. Graham left Tennessee third on the career pass interceptions list with 15. He collected 293 return yards in his three years and scored three touchdowns off turnovers. He led the Vols his junior and senior years in interceptions. His All-America year of 1972 saw him pick off seven passes, ranking him fifth on the season pass interceptions list when his career was over. As a sophomore, Graham was part of a

secondary that intercepted a school record 36 passes. Drafted 8<sup>th</sup> round by the Chicago Bears.

### **Earnest Gray-Football**

Earnest Gray came to Memphis State University in 1975 and in four years, became one of the most renowned pass receivers in Tiger football history. The 6'3 wide receiver became a starter as a true freshman and over the next four years set virtually every Tiger receiving record. An Associated Press and Football News All-American, he led Memphis in pass receiving during the 1976, 1977 and 1978 seasons and finished his career with 97 receptions for 2,123 yards and 17 touchdowns. Gray went on to have a seven-year career in the National Football League with the New York Giants and the St. Louis Cardinals where he totaled 246 receptions for 3,790 yards and 27 touchdowns. Gray's honors include being named to the 1977 and 1978 All-South Independent team, being named the 1978 Male Athlete of the Year for the University of Memphis, being selected to play in the 1979 Senior Bowl and induction into the M Club Hall of Fame in 1991. He has been employed with the Memphis Fire Department for 27 years as the Occupational Safety & Health Administration Coordinator.

### **Missy Kane- Track**

Missy, Nashville native, graduated from The University of Tennessee in 1977 as a captain of the nationally ranked women's track team. Missy started as a walk on but quickly rose as a leader for her team helping them win 4<sup>th</sup> place at the AIAW championships and a 4<sup>th</sup> place 3200 relay finish in 1977. Missy stayed in Knoxville and taught and coached at Knoxville's Central High school, before returning for grad school at UTK. Like a true competitor, Missy kept running and placed 3<sup>rd</sup> at the USA Championships and qualified for international Meets. In 1984 at the US Olympic Trials she ran her best time of 4:06 and qualified for the US Olympic Team. She ran in the games and fell just short of the finals. After her national attention, she returned as a UT Cross Country Coach and was named SEC coach of the year in 1990 along with an SEC title.

### **Lester McClain -Football**

Lester McClain, born in Nashville and attended Haynes High school and Antioch High School in Antioch, Tennessee. He later became the first African American to ever play in an SEC varsity football game for Tennessee when they played Georgia on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1968 under Head Coach Doug Dickey. In his three years at Rocky Top (freshmen were ineligible to play varsity prior to the 1970's), the Nashville native caught 70 passes for 1,003 yards and 10 touchdowns, while rushing 10 times for 123 yards and two scores. In 1970, McClain led the Big Orange in kickoff return yards, bringing eight kicks back a total of 168 yards. He was selected in the ninth round of the 1971 NFL draft by the Chicago Bears. Lester currently owns a State Farm insurance agency in Nashville.

### **Mike Taylor-Football/Official**

Taylor is a graduate of North side High School in Jackson where he was the football team captain, MVP and AAA all-state team. He graduated from UT-Martin where he was a member of the UTM football team. Taylor was a 4 year starter on the offensive line with 44 consecutive starts and was named offensive Player of the game against Austin Peay when he was the offensive team captains. Taylor was a member of the Northwest TSSAA officials until he joined the OVC in 1993 and worked 2 National Semi Final games along with numerous playoff games before being hired by the SEC in 1999. As an SEC official he has worked 17 post season assignments including the National Championship in '05, 4 SEC championship games, 5 BCS games and numerous bowl games. Additional memorable games include the Blue Grass Miracle and the Iron Bowl kick return. Taylor is a member of the Jackson Madison County Sports Hall of Fame and the UTM Hall of Fame. Mike and his late wife Jerrie have two sons, Michael Taylor II, a freshman on the Ole Miss Football team and Cade Taylor a freshman at University School of Jackson.

### ***Life-Time Achievement Inductee***

#### **Duard Walker-Coach**

Duard B. Walker played high school football, basketball, and baseball, earning varsity letters in each at Mary Hughes High School in Piney Flats, Tennessee. As a freshman at East Tennessee State University, he earned a varsity letter in baseball, and at Milligan he lettered in football, basketball, tennis, baseball and track. He is the only Milligan athlete to have earned 12 varsity letters in five intercollegiate sports. He was selected as outstanding scholar-athlete in 1947-48. In 1951 Walker returned to Milligan as a coach and has coached non-scholarship teams in baseball (eight years); basketball (15 years); cross country (20 years); track and field (20 years); tennis(20) and the athletic director for 35 years.

### ***Posthumous Inductees***

#### **Steve McNair- Football**

McNair was born Mississippi, and attended Mount Olive High School where he played football, baseball, and basketball in addition to running track. Steve went onto play at Alcorn State where he finished his career with 14,496 passing yards and threw 119 touchdowns, 2,327 yards rushing To this day Steve's records still stand and no one will ever forget the four amazing years he gave Alcorn State University. McNair continued to show his amazing abilities with the Tennessee Titans from 1995-2005 and was the team's quarterback for 135 games (regular and post-season). McNair led the Titans to 78 wins, threw for nearly 27,000 yards and 153 touchdowns, rushed for over 3500 yards and 40 touchdowns and guided the team to an appearance in Super Bowl XXXIV.

#### **King Omeg-Golf Coach**

A sports statistician could make a strong case that King Oehmig '69 is the most successful coach in the history of Tennessee high school sports. After all, who could argue against 21 state championships, 18 region titles, and 15 individual state champions all in a brief 12-year career? And that is just a short summary of King's career as head golf coach at Baylor. Recognized by the National High School Coaches Association as the U.S. Girls' Golf Coach of the Year in 1997, King presided over 12 of the state dynasty Baylor girls' team while his boys' squads were winning nine more. Five different Baylor girls won 11 individual state championships and three different Baylor

boys won four individual titles under King's supervision from 1997-2008. Baylor grads that played for King were twice Southeastern Conference Players of the Year, twice SEC Scholar Athletes of the Year, and one was a NCAA National Player of the Year. Six Baylor golfers during King's tenure were NCAA All-Americans and five have played or are playing on either the LPGA or PGA Tours.

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