



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Irving ISD Athletic Hall of Fame Names Inductees

The Irving ISD Athletic Hall of Fame Committee is pleased to announce the Class of 2020-2021, which includes an ardent community supporter, a trifecta athlete, an outstanding Irving ISD athlete and coach, and a former Dallas Cowboys football player. The inductees (in alphabetical order) are:

- Bruce Burns,
- Tom Ladusau,
- Tyson-Thompson: El and
- Norman Watkins.

Now in its ninth year, the Irving ISD Hall of Fame is designed to honor those who contributed to athletic excellence throughout the history of Irving ISD. Read more about this year's honorees below.

Bruce Burns

As a community leader, Bruce Burns has received countless awards and honors. However, three of the most prestigious are the City of Irving's High Spirit Award from the Mayor, the Community Builder Award from the Masonic Lodge and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce.

Now he can add a fourth top-level honor - Irving ISD Athletic Hall of Fame inductee.

For more than 30 years, Burns has given benevolently to Irving ISD. From donating to scholarships through the Irving Schools Foundation, to mentoring students and working

with students with special needs, he has contributed in many ways. He has collaborated with the Irving ISD Board of Trustees to rename facilities after others and has been a great supporter of the district's athletic program. With extensive outreach to city officials, including the mayor, police chief and fire chief, he has served as a liaison to gain support and recognition for Irving ISD programs and events.

Burns credits his coaches, teachers and mentors at Irving, particularly Tom Uhr and Murphy Webster, for his love of the Irving community and its schools. He attended Irving ISD from first grade through December of his senior year, when he moved to help his family. During his time as an Irving ISD student, he played football and ran track at Bowie Middle School and Irving High School. In high school, he won City, District and Regional Championships in the mile run, setting the record his junior year with a 4:21 time.

Following high school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971. He is a Purple Heart recipient and proud veteran, recognizing and supporting his fellow veterans by facilitating the Purple Heart City Designation for the City of Irving from the Department of Veteran Affairs. He has also served as the guest speaker at many military commemoration days in Irving ISD schools.

"His extraordinary ability to bring people together for the good of Irving ISD and the community is unequalled," says his longtime friend and nominator, Kevin Lear.

Tom Ladusau

Tom Ladusau left his mark on Irving ISD as both a player and a coach. He is said to have been the first athlete at MacArthur High School to be a starter in three sports - baseball, football and basketball.

As a four-year letterman in baseball, he led MacArthur to its first zone championship. He was also a two-year letterman in basketball and football, serving as a team captain for the latter. He earned All-District, All-Zone and All-City honors in baseball,

basketball and football and was also a member of the National Honor Society and named the Irving Optimist Athlete of the Year.

Ladusau was offered a football scholarship to the University of Texas at Arlington but chose instead to play baseball at Hill Junior College, where he was the starting pitcher for two years. He then transferred to Texas Christian University (TCU), where he amassed an impressive 14-1 record and guided his team to a Southwest Conference baseball co-championship and led the pitching staff with a 1.72 ERA in 1972.

Upon completion of his athletic career, he coached in Irving ISD for five years - first at Bowie Junior High School and later Nimitz High School, where he coached freshman football and served as head coach of the baseball team from 1976 to 1979.

He also coached in Hurst, and was an assistant principal in Keller ISD and assistant principal, athletic director, interim principal and executive director of support services in Coppell ISD before retiring in 2008 after a 40-year career in education and impacting countless students and coaches.

Since his retirement, Ladusau continues to make an impact through financial scholarship donations to the Irving Schools Foundation.

“He truly is a quality achiever and model for others,” says his longtime friend and nominator Marc Richards.

Tyson-Thompson: El

Before donning the blue and silver of the Dallas Cowboys as a running back/kick return specialist, Tyson-Thompson: El shined in the gold and black of Irving High School. As a senior, the running back rushed for 2,418 yards on 358 carries and was a semi-finalist for the 1999 Texas Class 5A Player of the Year award. In 1998, he rushed for 525 yards in a single game (against L. D. Bell High School), the third most in Texas high school history and the most ever in Class 5A. The football and track star also garnered All-District honors in 1997, 1998 and 1999.

Thompson: El then took his talents to Garden City Community College in Garden City, Kan. In two seasons he saw limited playing time but still recorded 1,063 rushing yards on 159 carries and 12 touchdowns. In his final game, he rushed 25 times for 323 yards and three touchdowns against nationally-ranked Glendale Community College. He transferred after his sophomore season to San Jose State University.

At San Jose State, Thompson: El closed out his collegiate career playing in all 11 games with eight starts as running back while also seeing action as a kick returner. He posted 811 rushing yards (led the team) and five touchdowns (third on the team). He declared for the NFL Draft after his junior season.

His speed impressed the Cowboys during a tryout at Valley Ranch, and he was signed as an undrafted free agent to compete for the reserve running back and kick returner positions in 2005. He made the team as third on the running back depth chart (behind Julius Jones and Marion Barber), and despite a Jones injury, he rushed 20 times for 75 yards against the Philadelphia Eagles and was named NFL Rookie of the Week. He finished the season with team records for kickoff returns (57) and kickoff return yardage (1,399) while ranking ninth in the NFL with a 24.5-yard average.

Thompson: El also played professionally with the Las Vegas Locomotives of the United Football League (UFL) and the Tri-Cities Fever of the Indoor Football League (IFL).

Norman Watkins

Norman A. Watkins Jr. excelled in both academics and athletics at an early age. In high school, his athletic career flourished. As an Irving High Tiger, he was a triple-sport athlete, excelling in football, wrestling and track during his tenure (1988 to 1991).

Throughout his high school career, he garnered many awards and recognitions for his academic and athletic accomplishments as well as his leadership contributions, especially his senior year. He was awarded more than 100 scholarships and received

recognition from both the U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserve for academic and athletic excellence.

His athletic achievements include being named Who's Who in men's athletics, Defensive Player of the Year, team captain, first team All-District Defensive End, Super Prep All-American, first team *Dallas Times Herald* All-Metroplex, first team *Dallas Morning News* All-Metroplex and first team All-City Defensive End. Watkins was also selected Most Friendly and Most Athletic by his peers, and was selected to compete in the Texas Whataburger All-Star Game.

As a junior, he qualified for state in wrestling, winning second at regionals. In track and field, he was named MVP, winning district titles in both the 100 and 400 meter relay and a championship in the 100-meter dash.

After his storied high-school career, Watkins took his talents to the University of Texas at Austin (UT), where he was a four-year letterman (1991-1994) and starter for three years. In his first year he earned honorable mention Freshman of the Year for the Southwest Conference and was named the University of Texas Blue Chip Special Team Player of the Week. Watkins was also named Defensive Player of the Week in the Southwest Conference his sophomore and junior years. In his senior season, he received the Coach's Award and honorable mention All-Conference honors.

After a short stint in NFL Europe, Watkins received his Bachelor of Arts in sociology from UT in 1996. He continued his professional career in the mortgage and technology fields and is presently the sales national channel manager at a leading technology company, Avaya. "Closing a deal—that's my sack now, that's my tackle now," he says. During his professional career, Norman has made XL Fortune 500 list on Austin360.com for people to watch in the community. He's also been featured in the *Austin American Statesman*.

Watkins is involved in a number of foundations and organizations, including board member for Partnerships For Children, and volunteering with Safe Place, Neighborhood Longhorns, American Heart Association and numerous keynote speaking engagements for

schools across Texas. His No. 1 passion is to be a servant for others. The Baton Rouge, La., native gives back to his burnt-orange brotherhood by providing mentorship for current student athletes.

In his personal life, Watkins is an avid yogi, practicing four times a week. He was selected and featured by *Austin Monthly* as one of the most eligible bachelors in Austin. He enjoys cooking, traveling, spending time with friends, family and his dogs Henry and Frankie. With his passion for helping others, he continues to lead by example with one of his favorite scriptures, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16.

The 2020 Hall of Fame banquet scheduled for June 13 has been postponed. The details of the rescheduling will be determined at a later date.

The Irving ISD Athletic Hall of Fame also includes:

The 2019 Class:

- Tony Arnold, Irving athlete
- Joe Barnett, coach
- Stan Cason, stadium announcer
- Glenn Sullivan, Irving athlete

The 2018 Class:

- Ken Dabbs, coach
- Barry Knott, Nimitz athlete & Irving coach
- Don Poe, coach
- Mike Sartor, coach

The 2017 Class:

- Brad Knouse, MacArthur athlete
- Hobart Lytal, coach
- Duane Miller, Irving athlete
- Thomas Uhr, coach

The 2016 Class:

- DeMarcus Faggins, Irving athlete
- Kelvin Korver, Irving athlete
- Ray Overton, coach
- Morris Sloan, coach and Irving athlete

The 2015 Class:

- Jim Bennett, coach
- Mike Phillips, MacArthur athlete
- Bill Rutherford, Irving athlete
- Kenny Walters, Irving athlete

The 2014 Class:

- Brandel Chamblee, MacArthur athlete
- Ruthie Lobb Davis, Irving athlete
- Aaron De La Torre, Irving athlete
- Margie Stipes, community contributor
- Randy Waldrum, MacArthur athlete
- Murphy Webster, coach

The 2013 Class:

- Michael Huff, Nimitz athlete

- Kerry Cooks, Nimitz athlete
- Joe Perryman, coach
- Anne Uhr, coach
- Joy and Ralph Ellis, community contributors

The 2012 Class:

- Akin Ayodele, MacArthur athlete
- Cedric Colby, MacArthur athlete
- Alan Lowry, Irving athlete
- David Rose, Irving athlete
- Deeanna Williams, Nimitz athlete
- Mike Farda, coach
- Bob Harrell, coach and athletic director
- Dick Lear, community contributor

*For more information, contact Erika Pedroza, Irving ISD Communications & Marketing Coordinator
epedroza@irvingisd.net, office: 972-600-5476, cell: 214-213-9708*