

Athletic Hall of Fame Inductees:

Michel (Nixon) Gage – Michel is a 1990 graduate of Kennedy High School. During her years at Kennedy, she was a three-sport athlete competing in cross country, track and field, and basketball for the Cougars. Michel loved to run and she made cross country and track her primary sports at Kennedy. She earned varsity letters in both sports all 4 years under the tutelage of legendary Hall of Fame coach, Harold Wilkinson, as a distance runner. Upon the completion of her eligibility, Michel held both the 1500 meter and 3000 meter run records at Kennedy. As a sophomore, Michel played sophomore basketball and also served as a manager for the varsity squad. This endeavor led to an interest and participation in basketball as a student athletic trainer for the boys' basketball team her junior and senior seasons, a decision that is still a part of her life today. Michel's dominance on the course and on the track along with other accomplishments led to her being awarded the Bernie Saggau Award her senior year as well as being selected as the 1990 Female Athlete of the Year by her coaches.

Michel took her running talents to the University of Northern Iowa on a track and field scholarship. Unfortunately a stress fracture in her hip caused her to have to end her competitive career as an athlete by the end of her freshman year. She continued at UNI and graduated with a degree in general science and a minor in athletic training and coaching. Michel then attended Eastern Kentucky University and earned a MS degree in physical education with an emphasis in sports administration. Her experiences as a student trainer at Kennedy led to Michel to become a certified athletic trainer. Although she is not currently practicing, she still keeps up the license.

Michel attributes her success in athletics and life to the positive and encouraging role models at Kennedy High School, in particular Coach Al Stiers and the late Coach Harold Wilkinson. "Mr. Stiers was always there to encourage me and Wilk was truly the 'wind beneath my wings.' Both coaches/teachers encouraged the strong values and morals I developed then and still have today. I know that Wilk will be looking down on me tonight with a big smile."

After giving her hip time to heal, Michel has continued to run. She has completed one half marathon and also one sprint triathlon. Her dream is to continue to train and complete a full marathon in the future.

Michel currently resides in Terre Haute, Indiana, with her husband Matt and her two children, Tanner (12) and Tyson (9). Her full time job is being a wife and mother, but she also will occasionally substitute teach at her son's school and also teach an online fitness course for St. Mary's of the Woods College. She continues to remain certified as an athletic trainer.

Please welcome to the Cougar Athletic Hall of Fame – Michel (Nixon) Gage.

Stephenie (Wilson) Tupa – Stephanie is a 1992 graduate of Kennedy High School. She was the definition of multi-sport athlete while competing for the Cougars, competing in all four seasons for all four years of high school. Stephenie had the opportunity to play under four Hall of Fame coaches; Rose Elvidge in volleyball, Bob Kolar in soccer, and Ed Miller and Rick Blackwell in softball. Stephanie earned 11 varsity letters while wearing the Cougar Green and Gold, including 4 varsity letters as a defender and goalkeeper in soccer. In volleyball, she was a

two year starter as an outside hitter for Coach Elvidge and was team captain her senior season. She earned multiple all-Metro and team awards, including team captain, as a three year starter in soccer. Team awards Stephenie earned included “most spirit”, “most hustle”, and “best defensive player”. She was undoubtedly the heart and soul of any team she played on.

Stephenie attended Dana College in Blair, Nebraska, where she continued her multi-sport participation. While competing for the Vikings, she was a four year letter winner in volleyball, a two year letter winner in tennis, earned a letter in softball, and also played club soccer for 2 years (there was no varsity soccer offered at the time). Volleyball is where she saw the most success, earning all-conference and all-district honors in multiple seasons. She finished her career at Dana with team records in service attempts (2097), career digs (2327), and career games played (502). Stephenie continued to demonstrate the work ethic and enthusiasm she developed at Kennedy, earning spirit, hustle, best defender, and team captain accolades for the Vikings.

When asked about her memories of competing for the Cougars, Stephenie commented, “going to state in volleyball my sophomore year was definitely a highlight as we beat Jefferson to make it to state. What made Kennedy unique were the teams and the opportunities. I didn’t have to be a spectator, I could play on several teams throughout my career and the Kennedy teams were truly that...teams. We worked for common goals and had fun while putting in the hours and hard work to accomplish those goals and made lasting friendships.”

Stephenie lives in Center Point with her husband K.C. and her four children – Kole (10), Kanon (8), Easton (7), and Addyson (5). She has worked for Rockwell Collins for the past 5 years. Along with her husband, they have continued to make athletics an important part of their lives. Stephenie and K.C.’s multiple sport backgrounds have allowed them to coach their kids in baseball, soccer, basketball, volleyball, t-ball, and football. Stephenie also still plays volleyball, has picked up kick boxing, and has coached club volleyball for the past 10 years.

Please join me in welcoming to the Cougar Athletic Hall of Fame – Stephenie (Wilson) Tupa.

Jim Long – Jim Long is a member of the first graduating class at Kennedy High School, graduating in 1968. Jim’s sport in high school was gymnastics – a sport with a rich tradition in our school’s history. He started his gymnastics career in 1960 with the Sokol Gymnastics Association. From 1963-66, Jim competed for the Cedar Rapids Gymnasts Team under the direction of Cougar Hall of Fame Coach, Gary Williams. He began his high school career at Washington High School during his sophomore and junior seasons where he earned varsity letters. Kennedy opened in 1967 and he changed his colors to Green and Gold – emphasize the gold. As a senior on Kennedy’s first team under Coach Williams, Jim dominated the state meet in 1968 placing second on the high bar, first on the side horse, first on the parallel bars, and first place in the all-around competition that combines the scores of all of the events. These state champion awards represented the first of their kind at Kennedy High School as the school was less than one year old.

Jim was offered gymnastics scholarships to both Iowa State University and the University of Iowa. He selected the Hawkeyes and competed his freshman year on their gymnastics team during the 1968-69 season. Following that school year, Jim spent the next three years in the US Army. He spent one year in New Jersey schooling in computer repair (noting that the computer took up the entire space of a room and could only send messages), and two years in Okinawa maintaining computer equipment for the Army Security Agency. Upon completion of his service, Jim attended Utah State University studying photography.

Reflecting on Kennedy, Long states, “Gary Williams was very instrumental throughout all of my years in gymnastics, and responsible for guiding my growth in the sport. It was great to finish my high school career with him. I owe him many thanks. To be the first team at a new school was unique. We were able to set the standards for future teams. We placed second at the state meet in that first year. It taught me teamwork and spirit to carry forward in college, the Army, and business.” He also spoke highly of another Cougar Hall of Fame coach, Harvey Hop, citing his great motivation and fun as he learned how to do giants on the high bar and other stunts on other apparatus.

After Utah State, Jim worked for Nissen Gymnastics Company and then for Nissen/Universal from 1975 through 1983. Gary Williams was again instrumental in Jim’s life as he put him in contact with the company who was looking for a project developer. Since 1984, Jim has been working as a sales representative for powder coatings companies, currently working for Seibert Powder Coatings. He enjoys aviation, canoeing, camping, and he is looking forward to retirement.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to the Cougar Athletic Hall of Fame – Jim Long.

Booster Hall of Fame Inductees:

Bill and Cathy Thompson – It is with great pleasure that we induct Bill and Cathy Thompson into the Kennedy Booster Hall of Fame tonight. Bill and Cathy are Kennedy graduates themselves, Bill graduating in 1978 and Cathy in 1980. While at Kennedy, Bill competed in football and ran track; Cathy was a cheerleader for the Cougars.

Three Thompson children have graduated from Kennedy High school – Tyler graduated in 2005, Miles in 2008, and Mackenzie in 2011. Tyler played football for the Cougars as a quarterback and also played basketball. He has remained an important part of Kennedy football for several years working as an assistant coach in charge of quarterbacks under Tim Lewis. He is currently working at Van Meter, Inc. in Cedar Rapids. Miles is a student at Iowa State University majoring in landscape architecture and horticulture. Mackenzie attends the University of Northern Iowa and is currently studying communications and social media.

Bill became involved with Kennedy Booster Club in 2001 when their oldest son Tyler started at Kennedy. Bill worked with Coach Lewis on the grounds committee and helped with creating and maintaining the north end practice fields. He was the football Booster Club rep and Kingston Coordinator and on the Benchwarmer's start up committee.

Cathy started taking photographs at Kennedy football games, shared her photos with the team, and then created an end of the year banquet video. She soon took photos of other sports and uploaded them onto a website named Cougar Clips for the Kennedy community to enjoy. Profits from the selling of her photos were donated to various groups and clubs at Kennedy like The Torch, Profile yearbook and Student Government. Her photos were also donated to be used for posters, calendars, handbooks, hallway displays, etc...

When their second son Miles arrived at Kennedy they became involved in the Performing Arts department. Cathy continued to take photos and Bill worked with the technical aspects and was stage manager during the Kennedy Show Choir Invitational. They also were extremely involved with the Theatre productions at Kennedy during this past decade.

When their daughter Mackenzie arrived at Kennedy they became Dance Team parents. Being involved with the Dance Team took them to the Des Moines State Competition, The Mall of America and Disneyworld. Bill videotaped every performance for Coach Arends and the girls, and Cathy of course provided photographs.

Bill and Cathy felt very strongly about supporting all the activities at Kennedy and worked hard at uniting the Booster Club and the Performing Arts. Cathy created a website name KennedyActivities.com for the Booster Club which showcases all the activities at Kennedy. The website provides information, schedules, accomplishments and photos of the activities at Kennedy.

Bill and Cathy want to encourage everyone to get involved at Kennedy and volunteer. They have enjoyed getting to know the students and faculty at Kennedy and have created friendships with other parents during the many hours of their volunteering at Kennedy.

The efforts and leadership of the Thompsons in the Booster Club, the FPA, and the Kennedy community in general have been invaluable over the past decade. We hope that tonight's honor is a small thank you for all you have done and will continue to do as proud alum and boosters of this great school.

Cathy and Bill – we thank you for your past, present, and future service to Kennedy High School and Cougar Athletics and we welcome you to the Cougar Booster Hall of Fame.