

SPIRIT OF MEMPHIS

Memphis Amateur Sports Hall of Fame adding 13 new members

By [The Daily Memphian Staff](#), Daily Memphian

Updated: March 11, 2026 2:51 PM CT | Published: March 11, 2026 2:28 PM CT

[1 comment](#)



Rachel Heck, the four-time Division 2-AA state champion, shot a final-round 74 on May 24, 2021 to win the NCAA championship at Grayhawk Golf Club in Scottsdale, Arizona. (Courtesy Stacey Heck)

00:00 23:27

1.0x

[ElevenLabs](#)

Our audio player uses an automated voice, which may mispronounce words and names or fail to reflect the tone of an article.

Thirteen new members will soon be inducted into the Memphis Amateur Sports Hall of Fame.

This year's class features acclaimed golfer Rachel Heck and current Memphis Redbirds manager Ben Johnson.

An induction ceremony is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Monday, March 16, at the Hilton Hotel, 939 Ridge Lake Blvd. in Memphis.

Rachel Heck embraces identity outside of golf

The Memphis Amateur Sports Hall of Fame (MASHOF) is a private not-for-profit tax-exempt organization funded completely by individuals and businesses. Funds are raised at an annual golf scramble and through the support of several area businesses.

Here's a new look at the new inductees:

Robert Hunter

Personal Contributor/Running

Hunter moved to Memphis in the early 1970s after graduating from Mississippi State and got into the Memphis sports scene playing slow-pitch softball. But, in 1992, a work friend who was also the president of the Memphis Runners Track Club invited him to join the group in area races. Hunter ran in more than 300 races, including 14 marathons, but knee surgeries slowed him down.

Hunter, however, didn't want his association with distance running to end, so he turned to volunteer work. He served as a Ride Leader for the Memphis Hightailers Bicycle Club and as president of the Memphis Runners Track Club for two years.

In the late 1990s Hunter began combining his technical expertise in engineering — he worked as an MLGW civil engineer for 33 years — with his running experience to accurately measure running courses throughout Memphis. Prior to his involvement, courses in Memphis were only approximations. Since 1999, Hunter has been the

primary course measurer in certifying and re-certifying courses ranging from 1 mile to the standard 26-mile marathon, including Memphis' St. Jude Marathon.

Hunter's love of running also led him and his wife, Sara, to enter Memphis into the Road Runners Club of America's Runner Friendly Community competition. Because of his work, Memphis received a Runner Friendly Community designation.

Jimmy Ogle

Personal Contributor



Jimmy Ogle receiving an Ida B. Wells memorial award during a press conference to commemorate the changing of Fourth St. to Ida B. Wells St in 2022. (Houston Cofield/Special To The Daily Memphian file)

Named the third-ever Shelby County Historian, Ogle's knowledge of Memphis was born out of his years-long labor of love working on the city's sports scene. His time

with the Memphis Park Commission sparked his desire to learn even more about the city, and his first job out of college was as a bowling machine mechanic for the First Baptist Church recreation program.

Ogle's connection with the Memphis Park Commission began in 1979 and ran through the 1990s. He helped with the Commission's Mobile Recreation Program and assisted in developing 5K and 10K races across the city.

During the time with the commission, Ogle also covered high school football and basketball as a newspaper stringer and served as a public address announcer in various stadiums. He added the roles of statistician and spotter for college and pro sports events and became a member of the Memphis Tigers and Grizzlies table crews.

In 1977, when he was the scoring calligrapher in the press room of the Danny Thomas Memphis Classic, Ogle made an enlarged scorecard for Al Geiberger, who recorded the first-ever 59 on the PGA Tour. Ogle is also the archivist for the Overton Park Junior Open and provided the names of all Grand Champions (boys and girls) since 1947 in the recent addition of the Memphis Golf History brick walk by the Overton Park clubhouse.

Ogle's love for sports started at a young age. By high school, at MUS, he had zeroed in on basketball. In his senior season, Ogle led the Owls in scoring and assists. He and his teammates finished the 1969-70 regular season undefeated under legendary coach Jerry Peters. Ogle played for Southwestern at Memphis — now Rhodes College — from 1970-73 and set a single-game freshman scoring record that still stands.

Rick McKee

Slow-Pitch Softball

McKee's career began in 1983 playing both fast-pitch and slow-pitch softball. In the late 1980s, while with the U.S. Army, he played for a Fort Campbell Post team that won a base championship and was named to the All-Army Softball Team.

Decades later, McKee is still playing.

He first joined Trippett Insurance and, playing shortstop, led that team to back-to-back Bartlett and Memphis City championships. For the next eight years McKee began playing with Lawler's Army, pro wrestler Jerry Lawler's team, and competed in benefit games around the Mid-South. Lawler's Army players became celebrities, signing autographs and taking photos with fans attending their games.

McKee was recruited by many top teams in the Memphis area, including the Spoilers, Pepsi, the Sprite Sox, Team Memphis, the Wobblers, the Sox, Newhouse and Wallbangers. Competing in tournaments across the country with those teams, he earned multiple tournament MVP accolades, highest batting average awards and all-tournament team honors.

Even after McKee turned 50, neither his level of play nor the competition dropped off. He has played solely with Monster Softball in the 50 Major, 55 Major, 55 Major Plus and 60 Major Plus divisions. With McKee as a pivotal player Monster Softball has won eight league championships, three SSUSA national championships and consecutive ISSA World Championships. He has a batting average better than .700 over his four-decade career.

Rodney Peterson

Track/Running

Peterson began his championship 'run' in middle school at Snowden Junior High.

Later, at Central High School, he dominated the 800 meters in Tennessee, winning every 800-meter race he competed in for more than two years. Included in that were TSSAA 800-meter titles in 1992, 1993 and 1994, making Peterson the event's first three-time champion in TSSAA history.

In 1992, he ran the third-fastest 800-meter time for a high school sophomore in U.S. history. In 1994, Peterson's efforts helped Central High win a TSSAA Class 3A state championship. He was also a member of the Warriors' 4x800-meter relay team that claimed state-meet gold.

Peterson signed to run at national power Arkansas and in 1995 he played a role in the Razorbacks winning NCAA titles in both indoor and outdoor track and field.

After one year in Fayetteville, Peterson followed his mentor, Arkansas assistant coach Stanley Redwine, to Tulsa, where Redwine took over as head coach. Peterson earned All-Missouri Valley Conference honors four times and an All-Western Athletic Conference distinction while running in the 600 and 800 meters indoors and in the 800 meters outdoors.

Peterson began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Tulsa, then returned to Memphis. He took over at Melrose High in 2001, led the Golden Wildcats to a state runner-up finish in 2002, and a year later guided Melrose to the school's first state track and field title since 1965. He was named the 2003 TSSAA Track and Field Coach of the Year.

Peterson is currently the principal at Colonial Middle School Creative & Performing Arts.

Robert Randolph

Youth Team Manager/Coach

From 1967 to 1996, the late Randolph coached at four area high schools — Trezevant, Collierville, Treadwell and Craigmont — and guided programs in basketball, track and field, cross country, golf, junior high football and other spring sports.

Much of his success came on the hardwood. But Randolph earned his first state title on the cross-country course in 1967, where he led Trezevant to the school's first state championship in any sport. That same year, he began his basketball coaching career as Trezevant's junior high coach.

From Trezevant Randolph moved to Collierville High, where in 1972 and 1973 he led the Dragons' boys basketball program to a 51-16 overall record and back-to-back state tournament appearances. Collierville's 1973 state title was the first by a Memphis area team since 1938.

Randolph also coached junior high football at Collierville, winning three Shelby County junior high championships and dropping only three games over three seasons. He coached boys' basketball and spring sports at Treadwell for eight years, and in 1977 led the 30-7 Eagles to a TSSAA Class AA state championship that included a 57-56 title-game victory over Manassas. Also in 1977, Randolph was named the Best of Preps Coach of the Year for all sports. He wrapped up his prep coaching with 14 years at Craigmont, leading the Chiefs' basketball and golf teams.

Randolph finished his high school career with more than 400 victories and coached athletes including Hank McDowell and Keiron Shine, both of whom played basketball at Memphis, and Tony Mickens, who played at Florida.

Al Woods

Youth Team Manager/Coach

For nearly four decades, Woods has devoted his energy and effort to developing Memphis' next generation of baseball players. Among those he coached: former Major League Baseball players Ben Johnson, a fellow inductee this year, and Jacob Wilson.

In the 1980s Woods began serving on the coaching staff of the Memphis Boys Athletic Association and assisted with the Memphis Tigers under-8 squad. His first team was runner-up at the AABC Roberto Clemente World Series in Georgia, and he assisted the Tigers' under-10 team that won the 1990 AABC Willie Mays Southeast Regional and advanced to the Pee Wee World Series.

Woods moved up to head coach in 1993. His under-13 squad placed third in the Dizzy Dean World Series. Two years later his under-14 team won the Sandy Koufax Tennessee state tournament, won the Southeast Regional and placed fourth in the World Series.

In 1997, Woods' Tigers posted a 77-8 record and won the Sandy Koufax World Series title. Five years later he did it again, winning the World Series and going 74-2.

From 2004-06, the Ridgeway High graduate served as an assistant coach at Southwest Tennessee Community College. In 2007 Woods set aside his coaching cap and assumed the director of baseball operations role at the University of Memphis, a position he still holds.

Larry Rutledge

Personal Contributor

A 'jack of all trades' type, Arkansas native Rutledge moved to Memphis in the early 1960s and graduated from South Side High.

A decorated bowler, golfer, baseball and softball player himself, he prepared field of play for many youth and adults while serving as a field director for the Memphis Park Commission for 15 years. Rutledge additionally worked with city officials to enhance fields and facilities around Memphis, including reworking batter's boxes and pitching mounds, building dugout roofs, repairing fences, laying new sod and cutting grass.

In 2012 Rutledge led a team of volunteers who refurbished LeMoyne-Owen's historic Jessie Turner Park with enhancements including a new scoreboard. When he heard that the University of Memphis, his alma mater, was getting a new batting cage, he reached out and asked if the Tigers would donate their old one to LeMoyne-Owen.

Rutledge was a TSSAA official for high school girls softball and volleyball and baseball for 15 years while also calling baseball games at the junior college and NCAA Division III levels.

He bowled in several leagues at Cherokee Lanes, Park Lanes and Billy Hardwick's from 1980-2008. His fast-pitch softball career spanned 20 years from 1975-95. He played for and managed several teams and helped form the Hernando DeSoto League, holding the honorary lifetime title of president emeritus.

Desmond Merriweather

Youth Team Manager/Coach



In this 2011 photo, Desmond Merriweather, Lester Middle basketball coach, talks to his team before a game. His daughter Ziona Merriweather, 4, holds his hand. Coach Merriweather is a cancer survivor. Students, parents and friends in the Binghampton community came out in huge numbers to support Merriweather at the hospital. (AP Photo/The Commercial Appeal, Alan Spearman file)

The late Merriweather's coaching tree speaks highly about his life and his sports career, but his deep roots in the Memphis sports scene began long before his coaching career.

Drawn to both baseball and basketball, Merriweather grew up in the Binghampton area and started playing at the neighborhood's Lester Community Center.

A member of Lester Middle School's first graduating class in 1987, he played at East High in the early 1990s and later at Lane College in Jackson. After returning to Memphis, Merriweather took over the boys basketball program at Lester and led the Lions to three city championships and three state titles. He later moved on to coach at East.

Calkins: In his moment of triumph, Hardaway thinks of the city

His longtime friend, former NBA star and current Memphis Tigers coach Penny Hardaway, was on Merriweather's staff at Lester and East, and Hardaway took over the Mustangs program as Merriweather dealt with health issues.

Before passing away in 2015, Merriweather inspired his cousin, Steve Terrell, to coach. Terrell founded the Team Dez youth basketball organization and landed the head coaching position at Lester, which he led to two state championships.

Ned Franks

Game Official

Franks grew up in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and played football, basketball and baseball in high school. Rather than pursue a playing career, his path in sports took him a different way — into game officiating.

At the age of 16, Franks umpired Little League Baseball in Clarksdale, the beginning of a 'calling' that lasted more than 40 years. He branched into officiating junior high and junior varsity football while he was still in college at Delta State, and he moved to Memphis in 1977, becoming a fixture on the city's courts and fields for the next four decades.

Franks started his time around the city playing adult softball and soccer, but quickly turned to officiating again. He became a TSSAA basketball referee in 1980, and later added softball and baseball umpire roles to his resume. Franks moved to the college ranks at the start of the 2000 season, calling games around the region for the SEC, the Gulf South Conference and various community colleges.

He also found time to call games for the Memphis Park Commission, Bartlett Parks & Recreation and the Millington Navy Base. Franks umpired softball games for men's fast-pitch and slow-pitch, women's slow-pitch and adult co-ed slow-pitch, and called games for the area's men's and youth basketball leagues.

Franks additionally served as athletic director at Holy Rosary Catholic School for 12 years and St. Paul Catholic School for another 12. For more than 20 years, he helped train the next generation of officials and umpires in the local Parochial Athletic Association while also officiating basketball, baseball and softball games himself and assigning officials for league games for 30 years.

Sarah Harris

Distance Running

Harris loves running even more than most diehards do. The proof is what she's done.

Harris ran the brutal Jackal Marathon series, an event of five marathons run on five consecutive days in the hot days of June. And she ran these the last two years, at the ages of 64 and 65.

She's competed in several Tours d'Esprit, a local fundraiser for Haiti Medical Missions. Running teams combine to run as many one-mile loops in a 24-hour period as they can. Harris set the record by running 108 consecutive miles in 24 hours.

Her love for running began in the mid-1980s, when Harris joined the then-Memphis State cross country/indoor track team as a walk-on. Since then she's participated in more than 400 running events, most of them in the Memphis area. Included among those 400 races — which range from 3 miles to 200 — are all the St. Jude events since 2002 and 17 Boston Marathons. Of the 302 races run in Memphis, Harris has finished in the top three 68% of the time, including first place finishes in 41% of her age-group races.

Harris also encourages others to run as a personal trainer, mentor and coach. Over the last 10-plus years, she's trained more than 200 runners of all ages. In 2008, Harris took over the Oak Elementary Jogging Club and headed it up the ensuing 14 years. In 2017, she started a cross country and track team at Oak Elementary for third through fifth graders and the squad quickly grew to 40 members.

Harris also was recently certified as a Road Runners Club of America running coach and began training adults at all levels, from walkers to 200-mile racers to several runners working to qualify for the Boston Marathon.

Joe Williams

Personal Contributor/Fast-Pitch Softball

Williams has worn every fast-pitch softball hat there is to wear in his 30-plus years with the sport, including player, coach, manager, sponsor and organizer.

A high school baseball second baseman, he also played in college and in a semi-pro league at Bellevue Park for a couple of years.

Williams took his first step into fast-pitch softball in 1978, when he formed a team with friends who called themselves the Memphis Rebels. He next played with the AAA Termite from 1980-83, helping lead that squad to the 1981 City Championship with a bases-loaded double that put his team ahead late in the title game.

His first time wearing all the manager, coach and sponsor hats came in 1984 and ran until 1995 with Williams and Sons Construction/Development, which played in the Memphis Fast-pitch League, won several tournament titles and posted more than 250 victories in 12 years.

Williams formed his next team, Roadkill, in 1998. The team played in three national tournaments and won more than 150 games. Next up: The Dawgs. Playing with and coaching the Dawgs, he was a part of more than 450 victories, six league championships and seven top-10 finishes in national tournaments from 2000-10. A year later Williams played and coached in the 50 and Over Nationals in Salem, Oregon.

Williams had a lifetime batting average of .325. He was also active in the Memphis Park Commission Kids Ball, teaching the next generation about fast-pitch softball.

Ben Johnson

Baseball

Johnson enters his seventh season as the Memphis Redbirds manager in 2026.

He began his baseball career in the late 1980s, playing in the Memphis Boys Athletic Association for the Memphis Tigers and leading his Tigers teams to state championships in 1989 and 1999. He had a 10-year association with the Tigers and played for his father, Larry, for four years; his pitching coach, Larry Edwards, from 1991-93; and Al Woods, another inductee in this class, in 1995.

Ben Johnson carried that success to Germantown High, where he starred for legendary coach Phil Clark. In 1998 Johnson was a member of the 40-4 Red Devils team that was runner-up in the TSSAA Class 3A state tournament. The next season, 1999, he was named the Memphis-area high school player of the year.

Johnson was recruited to play baseball and football in college, but chose an offer he could not refuse when at the age of 17 the St. Louis Cardinals selected him in the fourth round of the Major League Baseball Draft.



Manager #34 Ben Johnson during Gwinnett Stripers @ Memphis Redbirds game on Wednesday, August 30, 2023. (Wes Hale/Rad Action Photography file)

Ben Johnson to return as Redbirds manager

Johnson played 10 years in the minors, appearing in more than 900 games. He debuted in the majors playing 31 games with the San Diego Padres in 2005, and

appeared in 58 games the next year. In 2007 he was traded to, and played for, the New York Mets.

Johnson debuted as a manager with the Arizona/Goodyear Centennials in 2012. Seven years later, he returned home to take over reins of the Redbirds. Early in the 2025 season, Johnson became the winningest manager in Redbirds history. He enters this season with 428 victories, including a personal-best 80-68 record last year.

Rachel Heck

Golf



Rachel Heck reacts during the final day of the Curtis Cup amateur golf match against Great Britain and Ireland, Sunday, June 12, 2022, in Ardmore, Pa. (AP Photo/Chris Szagola)

Heck began her journey on the links around Memphis, spending many of her days as a youngster playing at Windyke Country Club with her father and older sister.

She rose to the ranks of the nation's best, and helped lead St. Agnes Academy to five consecutive TSSAA state team championships while also claiming four straight individual state titles.

Former St. Agnes standout Rachel Heck wins NCAA Region golf title

Heck, named USA Today's high school Golfer of the Year twice, was a five-time AJGA Rolex All-American and is a former Rolex Junior Player of the Year. She played for Team USA in the junior Solheim and Ryder Cups, and in 2017 she became the youngest golfer at the U.S. Women's Open, making the cut and finishing 33rd.

Despite obstacles caused by illness and injury, Heck became one of Stanford's most decorated female golfers. She won the 2021 NCAA individual title and helped lead the squad to 2022 and 2024 NCAA team crowns. In 2024, Heck rolled in the Cardinal's championship-winning putt. In 2021, she also was named the PING/WGCA Player of the Year and won the Annika Award presented to the top NCAA Division I female collegiate golfer.

While at Stanford, Heck joined the school's Air Force ROTC program. She gained her Props and Wings after graduating from the Air Force's ROTC field training, and upon graduation from Stanford in June 2024 was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant of the U.S. Air Force.

TOPICS

MEMPHIS AMATEUR SPORTS HALL OF FAME RACHEL HECK BEN JOHNSON

The Daily Memphian Staff
