



NIU Athletics Hall of Fame History



Left to right: NIU fixtures and alums Bob Brigham, George “Chick” Evans and Bud Nangle were instrumental in the establishment of an Athletics Hall of Fame – now in its 48th year.

**Chick Evans' 1968 Memo Led
to the NIU Athletics Hall of Fame and a Legacy of Honoring**

‘The Best of the Best’

By Mike Korcek

Sports Information Director, 1984-2006
NIU Athletics Hall of Fame, Class of 2003

The vision became reality in 1978.

Historically, the Northern Illinois University Athletics Hall of Fame evolved from a March 5, 1968, memorandum from soon-to-retire Men’s Athletics Director George “Chick” Evans. The memo outlined some basic induction criteria and a nomination process. The memo included criteria for four Hall of Fame categories: student-athletes, coaches, administrators, and donors/boosters. Copies of this missive went to Evans’ successor, Robert Brigham, and Sports Information Director Bud Nangle – both NIU alums and fixtures in the Huskie Legacy.

Momentum stalled on the project for a decade before a group of long-time DeKalb-Sycamore area residents and avid sports fans, who called themselves the “Last Meeting of

The Board,” resumed the Hall of Fame discussion. “The Board” membership included many older “NI” alumni, former Huskie student-athletes, tenured NIU faculty members and others such as Eddie Raymond – the former DeKalb Daily Chronicle editor-publisher – who had followed the local “college” for decades.

Under Brigham’s direction, Nangle created a “Pioneer Era” ballot of nominations for the inaugural class of inductees between the 1916-17 through 1936-37 academic years. Considering that his ties with the Huskie program dated back to 1939, Nangle fit perfectly into the role of research and development, helping the maturation of the Hall of Fame.

The charter induction class of November 18, 1978, focused on the Northern Illinois “classics” – pioneer coaches, administrators, and student-athletes. The early induction classes played in a “catch-up” mode and honored a higher percentage of “old-timers.”

Twenty of the first 53 individual inductees competed or coached in the 1930s and those initial induction classes were also larger (nine individuals in 1978, 15 in 1983, eight in 1984, 10 in 1985 and 11 in 1986). The Class of 2022’s 13 inductees is an exception to a recent trend of five to six individual inductees per year being added to the Hall of Fame’s illustrious list. There was a five-year hiatus between the first NIU class (1978) and the next one (1983).

With the advent of Title IX in 1972, the moves to NCAA Division I and Mid-American Conference competition for women during the 1982-83 school year and the impending integration of the previously separate male and female NIU athletics programs, it was time for the NIU women to be recognized in the same manner.

Under the auspices of NIU Women’s Athletic Director Susie Pembroke-Jones, the first women were enshrined into the NIU Athletics Hall of Fame in ceremonies at the annual Huskie Women’s Athletics Banquet on April 7, 1986. A second women’s class was inducted in 1987 before the Hall of Fame enshrinement and the two athletics departments were combined in 1988.

In conjunction with NIU’s 100th Homecoming weekend on October 20, 2006, NIU celebrated a Centennial Hall of Fame Induction Banquet with over 65 past inductees returning to campus. Of the 33 induction banquets and – since 2013 – theater-style programs, all but nine (1978, 1983, 1984, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2015 plus the 1986 and 1987 women’s inductions) have been part of the tradition-rich Homecoming weekend.

Now in its 48th year of existence, the NIU Athletics Hall of Fame will welcome the new members in its 37th induction ceremony in October of 2025. Of the thousands of student-athletes, coaches, and administrators involved in NIU Intercollegiate Athletics since 1899, only 234 individuals, 20 teams, and five families have been enshrined – the best of the best.

The NIU Athletics Hall of Fame is located in the north lobby of the NIU Convocation Center and is open to the public during regular business hours and during Athletics events.

NIU Athletics Hall of Fame Selection Committee Chairs, 1978-2025

Dr. Robert Brigham (1978, 1983-88)

Susie Pembroke-Jones (1986-87)

Cary Groth (1989-95)

Gary Evans (1996)

Brett Tucker (1997)

Mike Korcek (1998-2009)

Bill Finucane (2010)

Don Shields (2011)

Rodney Davis (2013-present)



**‘Class of 2024’ Inductees and Returning Hall of Fame Members
October 18, 2024**

Front row (from left): Roger Dutton, Tom Beck, Matt Byrnes (Class of 2024), Kate McCullagh (Class of 2024), Debbie Huston-Hodges (Class of 2024), Sean Frazier (NIU Vice President/Director of Athletics), Lisa Freeman (NIU President), Holly Reichard-Knight (Class of 2024), Pete Waite (Class of 2024), Lou Jean Moyer.

Middle row (from left): Dee Abrahamson, Stacey Barsema, Dennis Barsema, Ellen Chessick, Ken Chessick, Amy Foulke-Hartke, Kristin Hoffman, Nikki Kozak, Sandra Lutz, Anne Mucci-Iwinski, Jerry Pettibone.

Back row (from left): Kenny Battle, Rick Cerrone, Rodney Davis, Dawnita Doty-Teague, Bob Gregolunas, Chandler Harnish, Doug Kieso, Mike Korcek, George Tyms, Tim Tyrrell.