



PRESS RELEASE

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World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame remembers President Gerald R. Ford

38th President of the United States served as Hall's Honorary Chairman



President Gerald R. Ford

BOISE, Idaho, Dec. 26, 2006 -- The World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame is deeply saddened by the passing of President Gerald R. Ford, the 38th President of the United States and honorary chairman of the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame. He was 93.

"President Ford was a true humanitarian. He brought sincerity and decency to his every endeavor. There was nothing pretentious or imperial about him," said Larry Maneely, president of the board of the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame. "We extend our deepest condolences to Mrs. Ford and the Ford family. President Ford will be missed."

Ford, an Eagle Scout from Grand Rapids, Michigan, whose integrity and openness helped Americans recover from the 1970s Watergate scandal, became the Boise, Idaho Hall's first honorary chairman in 1994.

"President Ford brought immediate credibility to the concept of honoring world-class athletes for their humanitarian achievements," said Hall founder Myron Finkbeiner. "The president's involvement brought a legitimacy to the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame that otherwise would have been difficult to achieve."

Upon accepting the Hall's honorary role, Ford remarked, "It's my hope this award will someday enjoy the same stature as the Heisman Trophy and the Nobel Peace Prize by honoring individuals for their commitment to human-kind in addition to their contribution to sports."

Over the years Ford maintained involvement in the Hall through its selection committee. "It's about time that those who excel on the field of life receive a true, meaningful honor for their skills and spirit," he said.



Among U.S. presidents, Ford was the most accomplished athlete. He played on the 1932 and 1933 University of Michigan national championship football teams. In 1934 he was named the Wolverines' Most Valuable Player and in 1935 was named to the Collegiate All-Star football team. Ford's No. 48 Michigan jersey is one of only five numbers to be retired by the storied Michigan football program.

After earning a degree in Economics and Political Science from the Ann Arbor campus in 1935, both the Green Bay Packers and Detroit Lions offered him contracts. Ford instead chose law school at Yale, paying his way as an assistant varsity football coach and freshman boxing coach.

Ford's public service began during World War II as a volunteer in the U.S. Navy - first as a gunnery officer and later as a navigation officer onboard an aircraft carrier. His ship won 11 battle stars in 13 months in the Pacific theater.

Following the war, his service included 25 years in the United States Congress before being confirmed as vice president under the terms of the Twenty-fifth Amendment and as President Richard Nixon's choice to succeed Spiro Agnew. Ascending to the presidency on August 9, 1974 following Nixon's resignation, Ford served just 895 days in the Oval Office as America's only non-elected president, but helped the nation mend in the wake of Watergate.

After leaving office, Ford lent his name to a myriad of causes and remained involved in sport as a baseball fan, accomplished skier, and avid golfer.

On the congressional baseball team, he was an exceptional talent during his tenure as a Michigan congressman. After throwing out the first pitch at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium on April 8, 1974, Ford witnessed Hall of Famer Hank Aaron's 714th home run, which tied Babe Ruth's legendary record.

As a lifelong skier, Ford helped bring two World Alpine Ski Championships to Colorado putting the U.S. on the world skiing map.

As a golfer, Ford, who by some accounts had a handicap that at one point dipped as low as a 12 and maintained a mid-teens handicap at the age of 80, founded the Jerry Ford Invitational Golf Tournament promoting Vail, Colorado, for the first time, as a summertime destination and played three times at Sun Valley, Idaho's Danny Thompson Memorial Golf Tournament.=

World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame inductee Harmon Killebrew recalled his 1977 foursome at the Danny Thompson Memorial that included Ford, Clint Eastwood and Idaho businessman Ray Hansberger. "The president shot an 82," said Killebrew, who co-founded the tournament to



benefit Leukemia research in Idaho and Minnesota in the name of his late team-mate who lost his battle with the disease. "He told us it was the best round of golf that he had played."

During the same 1977 round, the Hall's Maneely, who was covering the event as a member of the media, recalled Ford launching a drive that sailed past the green on the 100-yard, fifth hole. "We helped the president, his playing partners and the secret service dig through the weeds in search of the ball," said Maneely. "He was just one of the guys looking for a lost ball and apologizing for holding-up play."

About the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame

The World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame (www.sportshumanitarian.com), located on the Boise State University campus in Boise, Idaho, recognizes individuals and organizations from the world of amateur and professional athletics who, through their humanitarian efforts, distinguish themselves as role models in the community. Since 1994 over thirty role models with world-class athletic ability and exceptional humanitarian achievements have been inducted to the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame. Each spring the induction ceremony includes recipients of an annual humanitarian awards program that recognizes community achievement in all corners of the sporting world through its President's Award, Pro Team Community Award, Don Simplot Idaho Humanitarian Award, the Tradition of Excellence Award presented to a Heisman Trophy winner, and the Nell and John Wooden Humanitarian Lifetime Coaching Achievement Award. Each year the Hall of Fame, in partnership with Boise's MPC Computers Bowl, honors a player from each team with its Student Humanitarian Award. The World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is open weekdays to visitors and humanitarians of all ages.

- www.SportsHumanitarian.com -

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