

Arizona Sports & Entertainment Commission Unveils the 2023 Arizona Sports Hall of Fame Induction Class

The Arizona Sports Hall of Fame takes great pride in introducing the exceptional members of the 2023 induction class.

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA, UNITED STATES, December 28, 2023

[/EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- [The Arizona Sports Hall of Fame](#) is thrilled to announce the extraordinary talents of its 2023 induction class, a group distinguished by their remarkable achievements and inspiring stories in the realm of Arizona sports. It is our honor and privilege to induct these seven outstanding individuals, who have not only excelled in their respective fields but also enriched the sports heritage of Arizona. This year's illustrious inductees are Abdihakim 'Abdi' Abdirahman, Rich Dozer, Terry Francona, Richard Jefferson, Jerry Kindall, Charli Turner Thorne, and Bobby Winkles. Each of them brings unique achievements and an inspiring legacy, further elevating the prestige of our esteemed Hall of Fame.



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Arizona Sports Hall of Fame's 2023 class, a blend of inspiring stories and sports excellence, proudly shapes Arizona's athletic legacy.”

Nikki Balich-Cammarata

Abdihakim 'Abdi' Abdirahman, nicknamed the Black Cactus, is a prominent long-distance runner and a four-time USATF Champion at 10,000 meters. Born in Somalia, he became a U.S. citizen in 2000, after moving to the U.S. in 1990. Residing in Tucson, Arizona, Abdirahman has been a significant figure in athletics, becoming a five-time Olympic team member at age 43, and participating in the 2000, 2004, and 2008 Olympics in the 10,000m, as well as the

2012 Olympics marathon. He set a USATF Masters marathon record for the 40-44 age group in

2019 and 2020.

Rich Dozer's victory in the 2023 Arizona Sports Hall of Fame Public Vote reflects his influential career in sports management, which includes founding the Arizona Diamondbacks Foundation and Phoenix Suns Charities. He was President of the Arizona Diamondbacks from 1995 to 2006 and served as Vice President and COO of the Phoenix Suns from 1987 to 1995. Additionally, his strategic leadership as President of the Footprint Center (formerly known as Talking Stick Arena, US Airways Center, and America West Arena) from 1989 to 1995 highlights his versatility and effectiveness in managing major sports venues.

Terry 'Tito' Francona, manager of the Cleveland Indians, has a distinguished career in baseball. He played in the majors from 1981 to 1990, then managed minor league teams and the Philadelphia Phillies. Under his management, the Boston Red Sox won the World Series in 2004 and 2007. His career began at the University of Arizona, contributing to the Wildcats' 1980 College World Series win.

Richard Jefferson played basketball at the University of Arizona from 1998 to 2001, averaging 11.2 points, 5.0 rebounds, and 2.8 assists per game. He was key in the team's 2001 national championship run and was inducted into the Pac-12 Basketball Hall of Honor in 2012. He won an NBA championship with the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2016 and is now a sports analyst at ESPN.

Jerry Kindall was a celebrated college baseball coach at the University of Arizona for 24 years, leading the Wildcats to three National Championships and three Pac-10 titles. He was the first to win a college baseball title as both a player and a coach. He made 12 NCAA Tournament appearances, and five College World Series appearances, winning three NCAA titles in 1976, 1980, and 1986. He was recognized as College Baseball Coach of the Year in each championship



Charli Turner Thorne, Courtesy of Arizona State Athletic Department



Terry Francona, Courtesy of KA Sports Photos

season and had roles as a broadcaster, consultant, and spring training chaplain.

Charli Turner Thorne is the winningest coach in ASU women's basketball history, with 488 wins at ASU and ranking second in Pac-12 career wins. She led the team to 14 NCAA Tournament appearances, three Pac-12 championships, and two NCAA Elite Eight appearances. Her teams achieved a 100% Graduate Success Rate for three consecutive years.

Bobby Winkles, a luminary in collegiate baseball, stands as the foundational architect of Arizona State University's Sun Devil Baseball, elevating the program to national acclaim. As the first varsity baseball coach at ASU, had a record of 524-173 over 13 years, winning three NCAA championships in 1965, 1967, and 1969. He was named NCAA Coach of the Year three times and inducted into multiple Halls of Fame. He also managed in the Major Leagues.

Nikki Balich-Cammarata, Executive Director of the Arizona Sports & Entertainment Commission (ASEC), expresses her excitement about the latest inductees, remarking, 'This year's Hall of Fame inductees are truly remarkable. They represent the pinnacle of athletic achievement in Arizona and continue to be a source of inspiration for both current and future athletes, as well as sports enthusiasts. Additionally, our Trustees' commitment to transparent voting and selecting the right honorees is invaluable.'

David Fitzgerald, ASEC Board Chairman, comments on the 2023 induction class with a sense of pride, saying, 'The 2023 inductees epitomize the spirit of Arizona's sports heritage. Their contributions have significantly enriched our state's sports narrative, showcasing commitment, outstanding performance, and a deep passion for sports, qualities that our Hall of Fame aims to honor.'

The 2023-2024 [Crest Insurance](#) Arizona Sports Hall of Fame, proudly presented by [Gila River Resorts & Casinos](#), promises to be an unforgettable celebration, shining a spotlight on this year's outstanding inductees. This event is set to take place at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort on April 13, 2024. Tickets will be available starting January 15, 2024, at www.AZsportsENT.com."

Nikki Balich

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