



125 YEARS

# SPORTS CENTER

*Syracuse University's stature has certainly been enhanced by its athletic program, which has generated enormous visibility for the University while producing a long list of memorable competitors.*

*Compiled by Bob Hill*

## **L** THE LEGEND OF 44

Legends often begin innocently, and at Syracuse University, the legend of number 44 began in such a manner one August day in 1954 in the Archbold Stadium locker room. Standing before Al Zak, SU's equipment manager, was a sophomore and fifth-string running back.

"What's your name, son?" Zak asked.

"Jim Brown."

Zak tossed Brown jersey number 44. Brown, the first Syracuse back to wear the number, soon became a starter, then a star. By his senior season many considered him to be the nation's finest player. He gained nearly 1,000 yards in eight games, scored an NCAA-record 43 points against Colgate, then scored three touchdowns in a Cotton Bowl loss against Texas Christian University.

Arguably the most talented athlete in SU history, Brown was drafted by the National Football League (where he eventually set game, season, and career rushing records) and the National Basketball Association, even though he stopped playing basketball after his junior season. He also received a letter of inquiry from the New York Yankees and was an All-American in lacrosse—he helped carry the 1957 team through an unbeaten season.

On his final day of athletic competition at Syracuse, Brown won the discus and shot put in a varsity track meet, returned to the

dressing room to change for a lacrosse game, then was called back to the track by a student manager. Asked to fill in on the javelin throw, he heaved it 162 feet on his first attempt, propelling Syracuse to victory.

Brown's football exploits set the stage for the showstopping 44s to follow, Ernie Davis and Floyd Little.

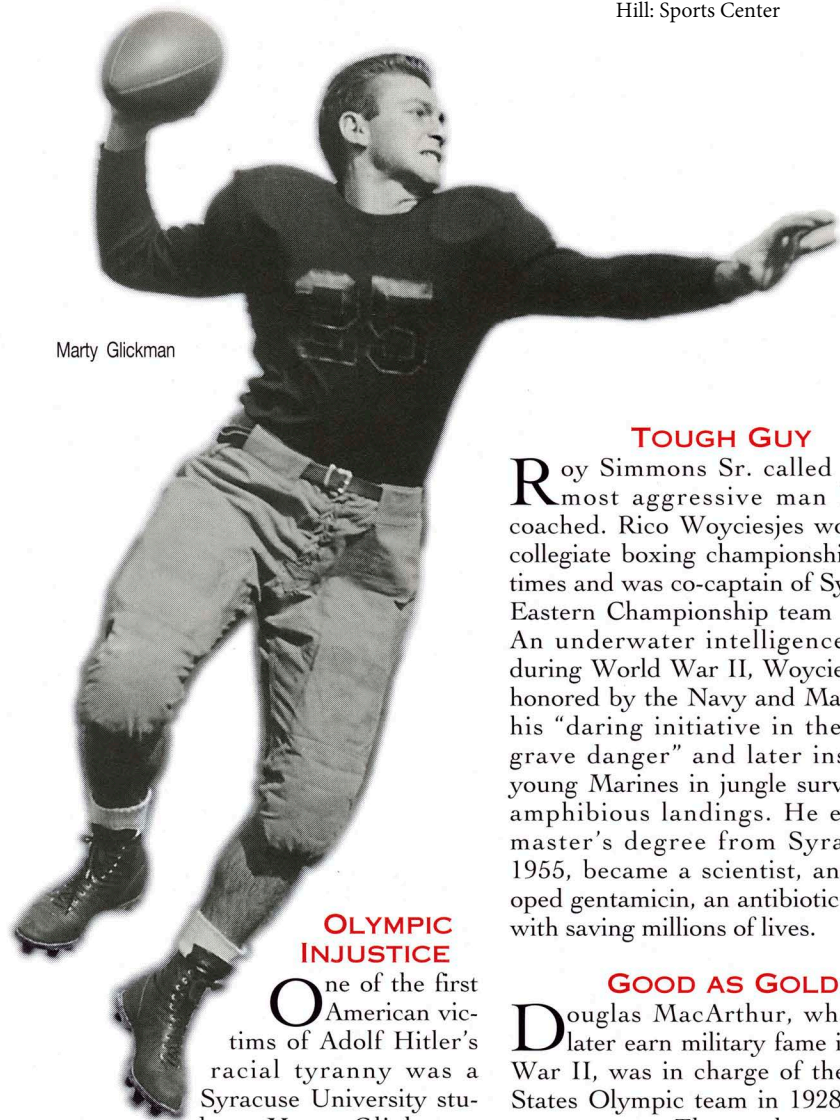
Davis didn't want the number, was coerced into wearing it, then sparked Syracuse to the national championship in 1959. He made the key play in the Orangemen's Cotton Bowl defeat of Texas, overcoming an ailing hamstring muscle to score on an 87-yard touchdown play. Two years later, he became the first African American to win college football's most celebrated prize, the Heisman Trophy.

Two years after that, Floyd Little was debating whether to accept a scholarship offer from Notre Dame or Syracuse when Davis died of leukemia. Little had idolized Davis and immediately chose to follow him to Syracuse. Little, who had the good fortune of playing with hulking fullbacks Jim Nance and Larry Csonka, smashed the records of both Brown and Davis and became a three-time, first-team All-American.

"Number 44 has real meaning now," coach Ben Schwartzwalder said at the conclusion of Little's career. "Every time we go out recruiting, kids try to bargain us into promising it to them."

They still do.





Marty Glickman

**OLYMPIC INJUSTICE**

One of the first American victims of Adolf Hitler's racial tyranny was a Syracuse University student. Marty Glickman, the Jewish football star and future sportscaster, lost his claim to a near-certain gold medal in the 1936 Olympics when United States team officials pulled him from the 400-meter relay team, which easily won its event. Jesse Owens, an African American, had already captured four gold medals in the track competition in Berlin, and the United States contingent was not eager to further embarrass Hitler by draping a gold medal over Jewish shoulders.

**TOUGH GUY**

Roy Simmons Sr. called him the most aggressive man he ever coached. Rico Woyciesjes won intercollegiate boxing championships three times and was co-captain of Syracuse's Eastern Championship team in 1941. An underwater intelligence expert during World War II, Woyciesjes was honored by the Navy and Marines for his "daring initiative in the face of grave danger" and later instructed young Marines in jungle survival and amphibious landings. He earned a master's degree from Syracuse in 1955, became a scientist, and developed gentamicin, an antibiotic credited with saving millions of lives.

**GOOD AS GOLD**

Douglas MacArthur, who would later earn military fame in World War II, was in charge of the United States Olympic team in 1928, and he was nervous. The track competition was nearly complete and the United States had yet to win a gold medal. Ray Barbuti, the football star from Syracuse, told MacArthur to relax, that things were about to change. Barbuti then won the 400-meter race in spectacular fashion, throwing his body across the finish line and onto the jagged cinders of the Amsterdam track. Soon after, MacArthur asked Barbuti to run the anchor leg in the 1,600-meter relay. He did, and the United States soon had its second gold medal.

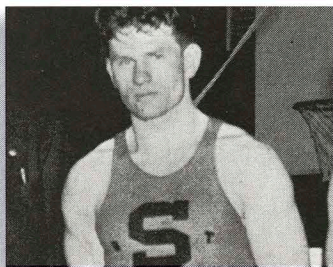
**SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT**

He was recruited from the intramural fields adjacent to Archbold Gymnasium and became Syracuse's first African-American football player. He quarterbacked the team to its first win over Colgate in 14 years and engineered one of the most astounding comebacks in Syracuse football history, passing for three touchdowns in six minutes in the fourth quarter of a 19-17 defeat of Cornell. Yet the legacy of Wilmeth Sidat-Singh is bound more closely to a 1937 game in which he wasn't allowed to play.

Born to African-American parents and given an Indian surname when his mother remarried, Sidat-Singh played in a racially precarious era. At the time, southern teams had an unwritten agreement with northern teams that often barred African Americans from participating in games between teams from the two regions. SU billed its quarterback as the nation's only football-playing Hindu. The University of Maryland wasn't fooled, and Sidat-Singh was forced to listen to a radio account of SU's 13-0 loss to Maryland from a hotel room in Baltimore. Sidat-Singh gained revenge the following year, when he was allowed to play against Maryland in Archbold Stadium. SU won, 53-0.

**THE RELUCTANT HERO**

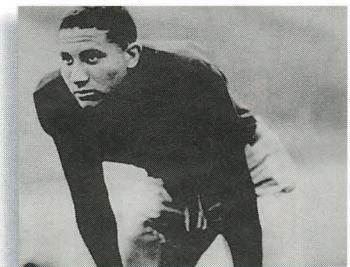
Basketball coach Jim Boeheim once scored a school-record 37 points for his undefeated high school team and spent the next day in seclusion, carefully avoiding contact with anyone who might have witnessed or heard about his exploits. "Jimmy didn't like people congratulating him," his father once said. "He was low-key. He didn't toot his own horn. All he wanted to do was win."



**RICO WOYCIESJES**



**RAY BARBUTI (CENTER)**



**WILMETH SIDAT-SINGH**



Despite the best efforts of a race official, Syracuse University junior Kathy Switzer (number 261) became the first woman to officially enter and complete the Boston Marathon in 1967.

### THE INTRUDER

As a college athlete without a college team, distance runner Kathy Switzer needed a forum in which to compete. The one she found garnered national headlines.

In 1967, Switzer became the first woman to officially enter and complete the Boston Marathon, which didn't welcome women for another five years. Switzer, a junior at SU, registered for the 26.2-mile race by using only the initial of her first name to hide her gender. She traveled to Boston with several men, acquired an official participant's number, and donned a hooded sweatshirt before the race.

Four miles into the event, an official spotted her and attempted to tear off her number. Tom Miller, Switzer's

schoolmate, running partner, and boyfriend, thwarted the official with a shoulder block. Switzer completed the race unhindered but not unheralded—her picture appeared in newspapers nationwide the next day.

Years later, Switzer's influence helped persuade the International Olympic Committee to include the women's marathon in the 1984 Olympics.

### MR. EVERYTHING

About the only athletic endeavor Vic Hanson couldn't master was hitting a good curve ball—that failing ended his dreams of playing professional baseball with the New York Yankees.

Hanson may have been SU's greatest athlete until Jim Brown came

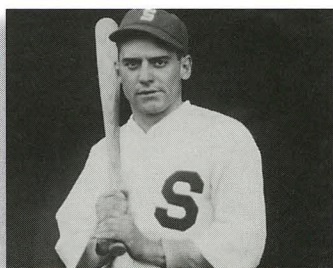
along. Hanson captained the football, basketball, and baseball teams, and was considered the nation's best football and basketball player. As a senior, he led the basketball team to the 1926 national championship.

### THE SLY FOX OF THE HUDSON

A pioneer in collegiate rowing, James Ten Eyck coached the Syracuse men's crew team from 1903 until his death in 1938 and was known as "The Sly Fox of the Hudson." His teams won Intercollegiate Rowing Association championship regattas four times and engineered a memorable upset of Cornell in the 1909 Poughkeepsie Regatta on the Hudson River. Ten Eyck's son, Ned, succeeded him as SU's coach until 1949.



JIM BOEHEIM



VIC HANSON



JAMES TEN EYCK

**THE HOBO QUARTERBACK**

Roy Simmons Sr. encountered at least one logistical hurdle in his decision to transfer to Syracuse from Illinois in 1921—he had no money to travel. That prompted the first of many illicit train trips.

“I’d ride the roof in,” Simmons once recalled. “I’d lay down behind the train station and catch that baby on the fly.”

Simmons, known thereafter as the Hobo Quarterback, started on both offense and defense for the football team, boxed during the winter, and played on two national championship lacrosse teams. Though Simmons is best remembered as SU’s lacrosse coach of 40 years—son Roy Jr. has coached the team since 1971—he also coached the boxing team for 30 years and spent 46 years as an assistant football coach.

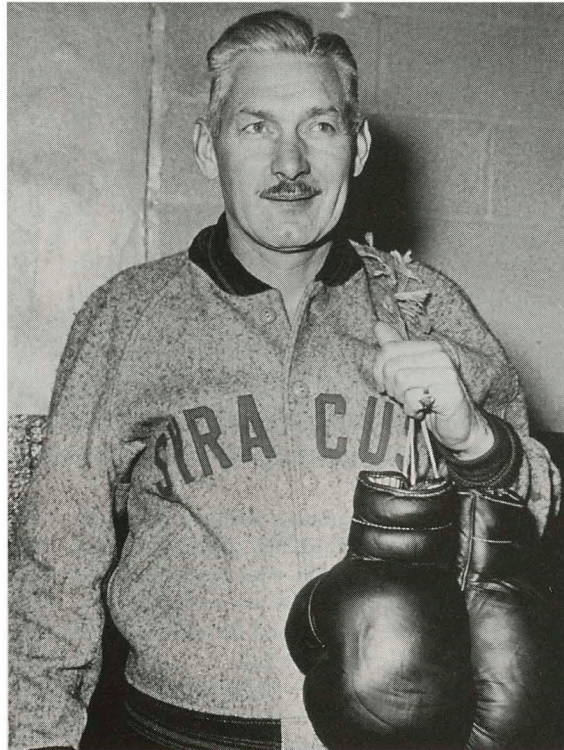
**DEAD ON ARRIVAL**

On Thanksgiving Day in 1962, Dave Bing and two basketball teammates headed to Lyons, New York, for a meal at the home of fellow freshman Jim Boeheim. “Hey, Jim,” Bing asked from the backseat of the car. “What does your father do for a living?” Boeheim tried to hide a smile while answering. “Oh, you know. He works.”

The car soon pulled into a driveway. Nearby was a sign—Boeheim’s Funeral Home. Bing immediately locked his door and fastened his seat belt. Eventually, he left the safety of the car to venture inside. “We were all around the dinner table and around the corner you could see the caskets and the corpses,” Bing

recalled. “It was an eerie feeling, but Jim was right at home.”

Bing was far more comfortable on a basketball court, where he quickly reversed the fortunes of a team that won two games during the 1961-62 season. He averaged 22, 23, and 28 points per game during his three-year varsity



As a student, Roy Simmons Sr. often arrived at Syracuse on the roof of a train.

won 153 games and the 1959 national championship, included words like gruff, tough, and intense. A 1960 story in the *Saturday Evening Post* called him something else—absent-minded. “Ben can get lost in a phone booth,” assistant coach Roy Simmons Sr. told the *Post*. “He forgets his wallet or his hat, he leaves his pipes everywhere, and he leaves his airplane tickets on the counter. But just mention one football play, even one 10 years back, and Ben will tell you every blocking assignment. He has the best football mind I’ve ever seen.”

**POLITICAL PAIN**

Gene Mills won each of his 76 wrestling matches as a junior and senior, but endured a crushing defeat in the political arena, where his quickness and strength were of no help. As a junior, Mills won the NCAA championship at 118 pounds. He skipped the 1980 season to prepare for the Olympics in Moscow, before which he was considered the overwhelming favorite to win a gold medal.

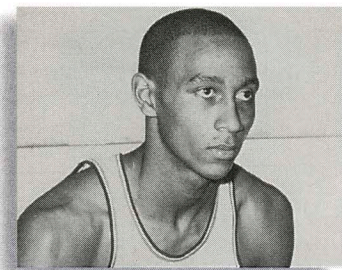
Instead, a Soviet wrestler Mills had beaten in three previous matches won the gold while Mills sat home with the rest of the United States Olympic team. President Jimmy Carter’s decision to boycott the Olympics in response to Soviet aggression in Afghanistan left Mills tearful and bitter—he said he wanted “to lock President Carter in a hold, to let him know how I felt about it.”

Mills returned to Syracuse as a senior, won another NCAA championship, and set the NCAA record for most career pins.

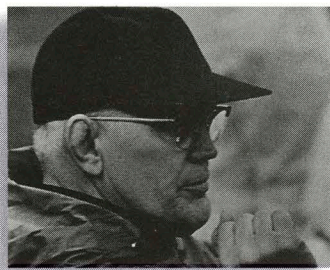
career and earned All-American honors as a senior, when he nearly led SU to the NCAA Tournament’s Final Four.

**THE ABSENT-MINDED WINNER**

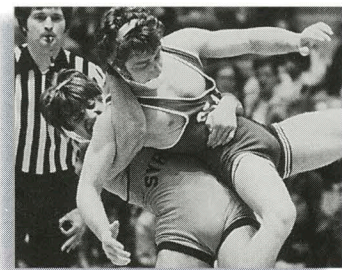
The typical description of Ben Schwartzwalder, the World War II hero who coached the Syracuse University football team for 25 years and



**DAVE BING**



**BEN SCHWARTZWALDER**



**GENE MILLS**

### THE STUDENT ATHLETE

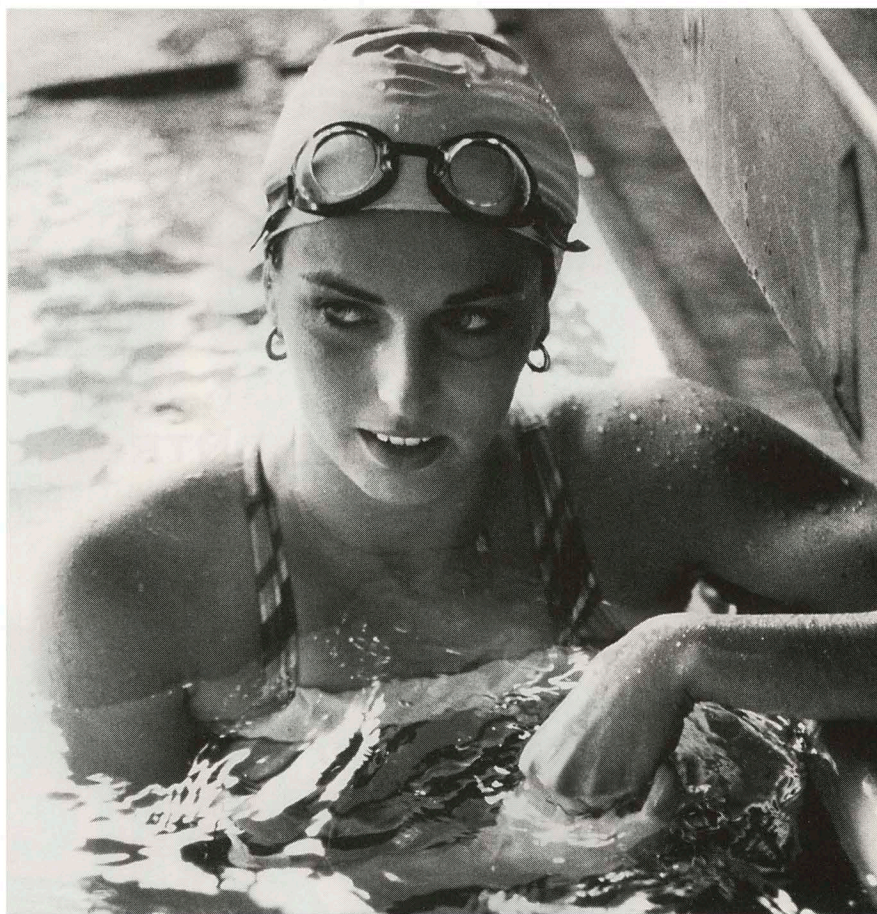
As a high school senior, Liz Vilbert received scholarship offers from many of the nation's best college swimming programs. But coaches from every school but one told her she couldn't handle the rigors of pursuing both a nursing degree and a competitive swimming career. She scoffed at the skeptics and accepted an offer from Syracuse, which welcomed both her athletic and academic talents. Four years later, Vilbert became a four-time swimming All-American and a 1981 graduate of the College of Nursing.

### AIR GAIT

Arguably the most dominant player in college lacrosse history, and certainly among the most dazzling, Gary Gait cemented his reputation for both attributes in a 1988 NCAA Tournament game against the University of Pennsylvania. That afternoon the sophomore from Canada unveiled Air Gait, a captivating move in which he leaped over the goal from behind and stuffed the ball in the net. He did it twice against Penn. His twin brother, Paul, later scored the game-winning goal with a more conventional shot. Two days later, the Gaits led SU to the first of three consecutive national championships.

### TEE PARTY

Though Ginnie Allen was neither a varsity athlete nor a coach at Syracuse University, the Varsity Club saw fit to honor her at the 1986 LetterWinner of Distinction awards banquet. An acclaimed golfer from a university with no women's varsity sports before 1971, Allen won numerous local, state, and national amateur tournaments. She graduated from the School of Education in 1940 and sub-



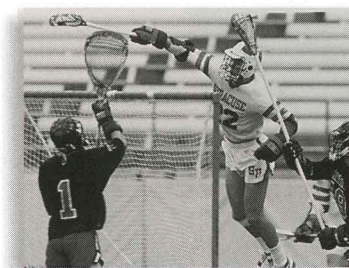
Liz Vilbert, a four-time All-American and 1981 graduate, defied the skeptics by flourishing in both the classroom and pool.

sequently became part of SU athletic lore through marriage—husband Phil Allen scored the 1938 touchdown that gave the Orangemen their first football victory over Colgate since 1924.

### PEARL VISION

He came out of Brooklyn with more advance notice and greater accolades than any previous Syracuse basketball recruit. Much was expected of Dwayne "Pearl" Washington, and he delivered immediately. A freshman

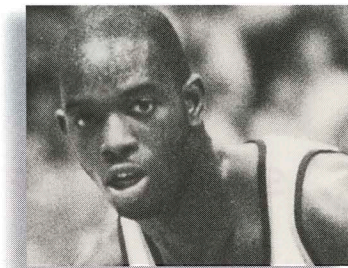
with an uncommon mix of moxie, talent, and charisma, he won Big East Conference Rookie of the Week honors five times during the 1983-84 season, beat Boston College with a desperation shot from halfcourt, and dazzled the nation in the Big East Tournament, scoring 30 points in a win over Villanova and 27 in an overtime loss to Georgetown, the eventual national champion. Washington's magnetism and skills helped catapult SU's basketball program to new heights. ■



GARY GAIT



GINNIE ALLEN



DWAYNE WASHINGTON