



WINTER 2022

ECKHART ATHLETIC QUEST

Your mission is to identify eleven local athletes or teams who have made a name for themselves in the world of sports. Each page will have information about the athletes and a clue. Using the map and your best detective skills, put a name to each location around town. Turn in your answers and collect prize entries for Read. Do. Explore. Winter Endeavors.

**LOCAL SPORTS LEGENDS IN THEIR
TIME**



I am in the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame. I credit my high school coach with teaching me the fundamentals of the game and getting me ready for bigger things. I still hold my high school's and my Big Ten school's records for most points and most assists. I am in their Hall of Fame and I was named a Big Ten Athlete of the Year as a senior. I went on to a coaching career, first as an assistant coach at Illinois, Purdue, Auburn and Georgia Tech. I was a head coach for 16 years. I am currently a real estate agent. Perhaps less known is that I also played volleyball, softball and ran track.



I won two state championships in my sport during high school. I then played my sport as an Indiana University Hoosier. I've played professionally in New York, Memphis and now Indianapolis. When I was with New York I was a starter in the Eastern Conference Quarterfinals of the 2019 MLS Cup Playoffs against the Philadelphia Union.

Here's what my coach has to say about me:

Coach Rennie: "... is another young player who brings great energy and effort into the squad. He can excel as a defender and in central midfield, and we're always excited to add a player with that kind of versatility to our roster. He is emblematic of the rising level of talent being cultivated in our state, and we are proud to bring...home to represent Indiana's Team both on and off the field."

I currently play for the Indy Eleven.



I was born in Garrett and spent my young life in Richfield Twp, but went to school at Salem Center in Steuben County. I was a multi-sport athlete in high school, playing basketball and baseball. Baseball is where I really made my mark. After graduation I played on some local teams, including the Waterloo Generals. We went to the American Amateur Baseball Conference national championships in 1958. I also played college ball at Griffin Junior College in Van Wert, OH. After finishing my associate degree, I transferred to Hillsdale College in Michigan. I played ball there for two years and was signed by Ray Lucas, a scout for the Toledo Mud Hens. I played several seasons in the San Francisco Giants minor-league system, as well as the Midwest League in Michigan City. My goal was to make the majors and I did it. My baseball career was slightly derailed when my Army Reserve unit got activated in the summer of 1961 when the East Germans built the Berlin Wall. By the next season I was back with the Giants organization in the minors. In 1964 the Chicago Cubs picked me up. I pitched 26 games as a reliever. Early that season I faced Giants great Willie Mays and he got a hit off me. By July the Cubs sent me back to the minors. I pitched one more year and then decided it was time to move on in life. I came back to northeast Indiana and raised my family here.



I graduated from high school in Auburn and set a state record in my sport while I was there. Then I went on to Indiana University and set a number of records there too. While at IU I set a world record in the two mile race. I made the 1936 US Olympic team that competed in Berlin, Germany. We sailed on the USS Manhattan, a ship with meals that had more food than most of us had ever seen in one place! It was a ten day voyage from Manhattan to Hamburg, Germany. It is hard to keep in running shape on a rolling ship. Plus the ten pounds I put on from all that food. When we got to Berlin, the German Olympic officials announced we were going to compete in the next two days! Needless to say, I had the worst competition I'd ever been in. I placed 13th in the 5,000-meter run and eighth in the 10,000-meter.

I always figured I'd compete again in 1940 at the Tokyo Olympics, but those games and the next ones in 1944 set for London, were both cancelled due to the war. In 1947, while an agent for the FBI, I got permission to train for the 1948 games. And while my training went well, the pieces never fell in place for me. After a long career with the FBI, I settled in Rockville, IN where I opened a Christian athletic camp, made motivational speeches around the country, and served two terms in the Indiana legislature.



We are from DeKalb County and we are a whole team. A very proud team. In 2016-2017 we had a great season. When we went to our state competition at the end of that season we had a lot of fun. Out of all the teams in Indiana we were selected to go to the USA games the next year. It was incredible. We had fourteen months to practice and get ready to be on the national stage. Our whole team got new red shoes from Foot Locker and we practiced at the YMCA. We had to do a lot of conditioning to get ready. We spent a lot of time at the YMCA and our game got fast! Whenever we came off the court, our opponents would say “Man, you guys are fast!”

When it was time to leave for Seattle we got a ride through Auburn and Garrett in a limo! We flew to Seattle and were part of 4,000 athletes, tens of thousands of spectators and we were on national television. We were a team of 10 players and three coaches . We played six games and we won them all! To win the gold medal we had to beat Team Nevada and we did! We really lived up to our motto: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.” We came home to a celebration at the YMCA, and in the fall the county put up signs telling everyone coming to DeKalb County about our championship.



I graduated from high school in Auburn and went on to play professionally in my sport. In high school, not only was I an athlete, I was also in the band.

While in the pros I played for two seasons for South Bend, one each for Battle Creek and Peoria and finished out with two seasons in Grand Rapids. My teammates always knew me as “Red.” (I was a redhead.) I was a pitcher and an infielder. I was famous for my fastball (and my lack of control over it too - I hold the league record for hitting one batter four times in the same game.)

At the very end of the credits in a movie about my sport, you can see me kicking dirt on the umpire’s shoes.

Along with my collective teammates, I am in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. In 2005 I even got my own bobblehead doll!



I never lived in Auburn, I was a Garrett Railroader through and through. I was also good enough to make a run for the 1948 Olympic track team. I was not good enough to make the team. I set records as a Railroader in the 440 and the quarter mile. I was high scorer on my senior year football team and an outstanding basketball player too. When I graduated from Garrett, I followed my sister to the University of West Virginia in the fall of 1941. Everything changed at the end of that semester when we entered WWII. Despite my father's objections, I enlisted in the US Army and signed up to be trained as an Army Ranger. I was assigned to the 69th Division of 5th Ranger Battalion as a staff sergeant. We stormed the beaches and climbed the cliffs of Normandy and then operated behind the German lines until the end of the war. I was awarded four Battle Stars, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Bronze Star, the Silver Star and two Presidential Unit Citations. I recorded some of my memories of that time in oral histories. Once the war ended, I wanted to go back to college and continue running. This time I enrolled at Duke University and became a standout college track star too. I even crashed a race in New York that I was not invited to, but knew I could qualify for. I arrived a half hour before the race began and won the 1000 meters handily. After graduation, I began my career in business and economics while living in the Washington DC area for decades. I was inducted into the Garrett High School Hall of Fame in 2014.



I was born and raised in Auburn and graduated from high school here. In the yearbook they called me “...the big, blonde Swede, the star athlete of A.H.S...” (It should be noted that my twin sister was no basketball slouch herself - she was the forward of the girls' team.) I ran track (with someone else who is an athlete on this Quest) and played football. My senior year the team was 6 and 1. In a 37-0 shutout game against Hicksville, I broke my shoulder and that was the end of my high school sports career. Which is too bad, because I had to sit out my senior basketball season.

I wanted to turn pro, but it was a different era and professional sports were not what they are now. I played a lot of pick up games where I got paid for just that game. I played for teams all over the area. One week I played for the Ort's Jewelers team from Garrett. A few weeks later, I played against them.

I did get to play college basketball at Central Normal College, a school that closed in 1946. But during the 1930s we had two undefeated seasons. At the end of the 1936 season we were invited to the Olympic trials for the US basketball team. We won the first few rounds, but ultimately were defeated by DePaul, who didn't make it to the Olympics either. 1936 was full of highs and lows. In January my mother died in a house fire in Auburn, then in April I married my high school sweetheart. The next year I was named to the all Indiana Conference team. In 1938 I finished school and moved to Lafayette and began teaching. When World War II broke out I joined the Navy Reserve as an ensign.

But I didn't forget basketball. I played the 1938-39, 1940-41 and 1941-42 seasons for the Indianapolis Kautskys of the National Basketball League. In January 1939 I played a game in Fort Wayne with the Indianapolis All Americans against the New York Renaissance (who would go on to win the professional basketball title later that year.) I was back in the area in 1942, this time in Kendallville, once again playing against the Renaissance. This time I was a member of the Jim White Chevies, a professional club out of Toledo, OH. My wife and I had two kids by then, so I wrapped up my professional career. But it was a heck of a run!



We are a team. And we are the first team in twenty-five years to bring home a trophy to our high school.

Funny coincidence - we beat the same school, Franklin Central. I guess they'll remember the Barons down in Franklin! Our record was 10-1, so we knew we had a good chance of going to state. But first you have to get through the playoffs, and that was not a sure thing! Our first opponent was Tippecanoe Valley. It was a squeaker, but we won by two at the last minute. This was only our third year as a competitive team and the first year that most of us had played together, so we had a lot to put together. But we've got great coaches! (You've read about them on another entry in this Quest). We've had great community support for our team and it was fun to have a police escort back into town after our state championship.



I grew up in Auburn after my dad moved us here to take a job at a sawmill. I grew up on base ball (two words, that's how we spelled it in my day.) And I got to live my dream and play it as a pro while making a name for myself too. I started out in the minors, like most of us did. The Midwest had a ton of professional minor league teams in those days, if you were halfway good, you could find a place to play. I spent my first season with three teams: Springfield, IL; Crookston, MN and Winnipeg, MB. Those last two teams, in the Northern League, were good. I signed on with the Winnipeg Maroons for a second year and got to play in their brand new ball park. 1908 was a good year - I married my girl Bertie in Auburn and I got picked up by the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League. It got better. Two years later I finally broke into the majors!

Charlie Comiskey signed me to the White Sox. After 3 seasons, I went to the Yankees, but then headed back to Chicago. I did something few other major leaguers had a chance to do - play with three major league teams in the same town. I spent two seasons with the Federal League Chicago Whales and then moved over to the National League Cubs. I had the first grand slam in Wrigley Field. I had a great run with the Cubs. But 1916 was a hard year. My wife Bertie died from tuberculosis in November; by June I had rebounded and married a local Auburn woman. Since I was gone so much, we kept our marriage quiet until the newspapers got wind of it.

After another season with the Cubs, I went back to the minors, mostly in the Pacific Coast League. I was in Portland for a series when we were given a tour of the local jail. The sheriff and my teammates set me up. They took me past a guy they said was the toughest prisoner they had, that it had taken three of their finest to bring him in. Just as I was walking past that cell the guy leans on the door and breaks out! I took off running! The newspaper story said I broke my own considerably fast record in sprinting down the hall and ducking into the first open cell door I could find. When they let me out - I found out it was staged. Yeah, right.

I eventually drifted to the East Texas League and finished out my career in Paris, TX with the North Stars. It was time to come home. It was hard moving on from the limelight of being a pro-ball player. My wife divorced me. I did have a habit of saying nasty things to her. I tried selling cars. I eventually bought a bar in Garrett. When I was in my 80s I was inducted into the Northeast Indiana Baseball Hall of Fame.



My sport is in the “field” category of “track and field.” I began in middle school. In 2012 I was the Hoosier State Champ in discus. After graduation, I spent a year at Purdue Fort Wayne and then transferred to another Auburn - Auburn University in Alabama. Now I help coach at New Mexico State and continue to train.

Training involves weight lifting, cardio, sprints and lots of discus throwing.

This past summer I competed for one of three discus positions for female athletes on the US Olympic team. The qualifying events were held at Hayward Field at the University of Oregon - a place with deep track and field roots. I had already set a personal best of 64.41 meters, I already met one of the criteria - meeting the Olympic standard of 63.50 meters. But I still had to be one of the three best in the country.

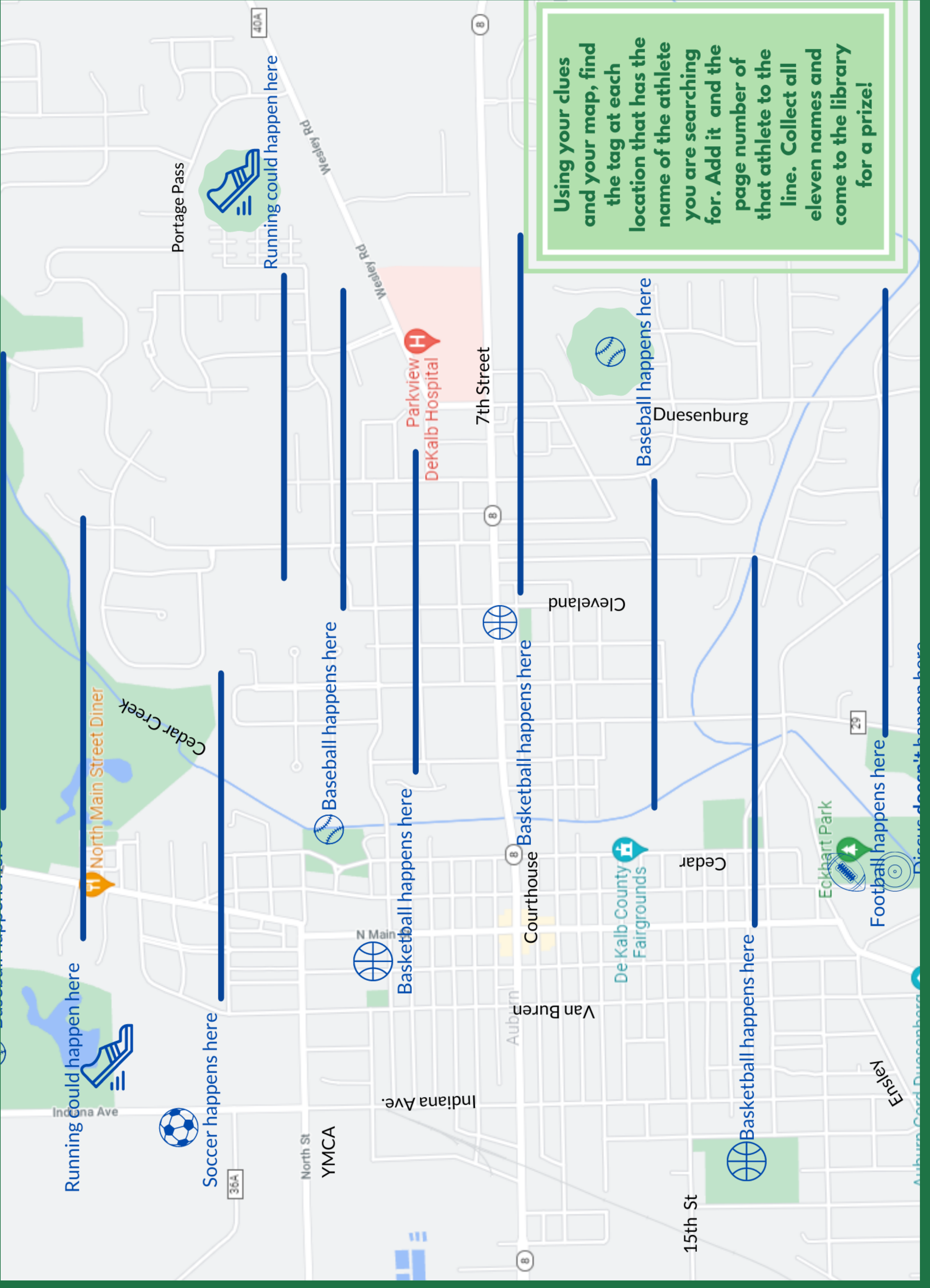
Friday, June 18 the semi-finals were held. I was comfortably in the top twelve with a throw just shorter than that of the eventual Olympic gold medalist, Valarie Allman. Saturday, the heat was turned way up! Twelve of us were in the finals, but only three could go to Tokyo for the Olympic games. After four throws, I was in fourth place. Not good.

My fifth throw was the one though! I threw 61.63m and made the team!

At the games, on July 30, I made my Olympic debut. I threw 56.22 meters. I made it into the top 12 of preliminary group A, but it was not enough to move on to the finals. Overall I finished 27th. But I don't intend to let this be my last Olympics! I hope to be back in 2024.

In December, the city of Auburn recognized my accomplishments with signs at the entrance to town!





Running could happen here



Soccer happens here



Basketball happens here



Baseball happens here

Basketball happens here

Basketball happens here



Basketball happens here



Baseball happens here



Football happens here



Using your clues and your map, find the tag at each location that has the name of the athlete you are searching for. Add it and the page number of that athlete to the line. Collect all eleven names and come to the library for a prize!