

San Jose Sports Hall of Fame inductees left mark in college, pro and Olympic sports

Jennifer Azzi, Bill McPherson, Walt McPherson, Mark Spitz to be honored

For Immediate Release

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SAN JOSE (June 29, 2006) – Four South Bay sports personalities who made their marks in basketball, college sports and the Olympics form the 2006 Class of Inductees of the San Jose Sports Hall of Fame.

This twelfth class, which will be inducted in November dinner ceremonies at HP Pavilion, includes:

- Jennifer Azzi, a two-time All-America basketball player at Stanford, a member of the gold medal U.S. team at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, a founding player of the American Basketball League and star of the WNBA,
- Bill McPherson, a star football player at Bellarmine and Santa Clara University who was an assistant coach on all five Super Bowl champion San Francisco 49ers teams,
- Walt McPherson, outstanding player and coach in football, basketball and baseball at San Jose State and for whom the school's basketball court at the Event Center is named,
- Mark Spitz of Santa Clara Swim Club, the first athlete to win seven gold medals in a single Olympics when he set seven Olympic records in the 1972 Munich Games and was named AP Male Athlete of the Year.

The November event, presented by Hewlett-Packard at a date to be determined, begins with a VIP reception and silent auction followed by the dinner ceremony. Dinner tickets begin at \$200 each and may be reserved by calling (408) 288-2936. Sponsorship packages range from \$2,500 to \$15,000.

The 2006 Class brings to 58 the number of South Bay sports figures in the Hall of Fame, which recognizes each honoree with a bronze plaque mounted in the concourse of HP Pavilion. The annual dinner is an event of the San Jose Sports Authority, San Jose Arena Authority, HP Pavilion Management/San Jose Sharks and the City of San José. The event benefits Special Olympics Silicon Valley Region and high school sports programs.

The San Jose Sports Authority is the sports marketing agency for the City of San José and supports youth and amateur athletics throughout the community as well as bringing premier sports events to the city. Visit our website at www.sjsa.org.

Inductee biographies

Jennifer Azzi

Azzi was first three-time All-Pac-10 and two-time All-America women's basketball player at Stanford. In the Cardinal's 1990 national championship season she was named the most valuable player in the NCAA Final Four and also won both the Wade and Naismith trophies as the nation's best player. Azzi played for two U.S. world championship teams and was a member of America's gold medal-winning team in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, which launched two women's professional leagues. She was a founding player for the American Basketball League's San Jose Lasers, and after the folding of that league, moved to the WNBA to play in Detroit, Salt Lake City and San Antonio where she became one of the league's most accurate three-point shooters of all time.

Bill McPherson

McPherson grew up in San Jose and was a star lineman at Bellarmine Prep and Santa Clara University. He is in the hall of fame at each school and the SCU weight room is named in his honor. McPherson spent his career as an assistant defensive line and linebackers coach at Bellarmine (1956-62), Santa Clara University (1963-74), UCLA (1975-77), the Philadelphia Eagles (1978) and San Francisco 49ers (1979-98). His 49ers

tenure included all five of the team's Super Bowl championships. He later was the 49ers director of professional personnel until January 2005.

Walt McPherson

McPherson was an outstanding athlete at both San Jose High and San Jose State in the late 1930s. He made his lasting mark in coaching at San Jose State, beginning in 1939 when at age 22 he was named freshman baseball coach, the youngest head coach in the nation at that time. At various periods during the 1940s he served as the Spartans assistant football coach, head basketball coach, head baseball coach and finally head golf coach from 1947-61. His 1948 golf team won the NCAA championship, and his 1949-50 basketball team ranked 17th nationally. He also served as athletic director in 1961 and '62, head of the physical education department from 1962-70, and commissioner of the West Coast Athletic Conference from 1965-69. McPherson is in the school's hall of fame in three sports – basketball, baseball and football. The basketball floor at the university's Events Center is named in his honor.

Mark Spitz

Spitz was a Santa Clara Swim Club star in 1960s who came from Sacramento to swim for George Haines. He led Santa Clara High to three consecutive CCS swimming titles (1966-68) and set many national prep freestyle records. He set 25 American records and won 24 AAU titles. Spitz won two gold, one silver and one bronze medal at 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. He left the area and led Indiana University to four NCAA championships. He was the first athlete to win seven gold medals in a single Olympics 1972 when he set Olympic records in each of his events in the 1972 Munich Games. His total of 11 medals ties the Olympic record for a U.S. athlete. Spitz won the 1972 Sullivan Award and AP Male Athlete of the Year award.