

Jim Thorpe

(c. 1887 ~ 1953)



Jim Thorpe is considered one of the greatest athletes in history, winning gold medals in both the decathlon and pentathlon in the 1912 Olympics and excelling in both professional baseball and football.

Born James Francis Thorpe—also known as Wa-Tho-Huk—in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), he was a member of the Fox and Sauk tribe through his paternal grandmother. Both his grandfathers were Caucasian, and both his parents were Roman Catholic; Thorpe remained a Catholic throughout his adult life. He attended local federal boarding schools in his younger years, and later attended Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. During his years at Carlisle, Thorpe excelled at track, football and baseball (in addition to lacrosse and ballroom dancing). He was an All-American selection in football in both 1911 and 1912.

In the summer of 1912, he won gold medals in both the decathlon and pentathlon at the 5th modern Olympics in Stockholm. Shortly afterwards, a report surfaced of his having played semi-professional baseball, and he was stripped of his medals. These gold medals were reinstated (as co-winner) and given to his children in 1983; the IOC finally restored Thorpe as the *sole winner* of those events only this past July, 2022.

After the 1912 Olympics, Thorpe spent decades playing professional baseball and football, until the age of 41, when he became the first president of the precursor to the NFL. In 1922, he co-founded the first American Indian professional football team. He was named *"the greatest athlete of the first half of the twentieth century"* by the sports writers of the Associated Press; in 2000, Thorpe was voted by sports fans to be the *Greatest Athlete of the 20th Century*. He also worked in Hollywood. His burial is still controversial: his widow had his remains surreptitiously moved to Pennsylvania, in a town now named Jim Thorpe. However, tribal elders and some of his eight children have fought to have his remains returned to his ancestral tribal land in Oklahoma.

"I never was content unless I was trying my skill... or testing my endurance."

St. Mary Magdalen is honoring the different communities of our parish throughout 2022.