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Sam Bradford and Johnny Bench among American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame 2023 inductees

OKLAHOMA CITY (January 30, 2023) – The American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame (AIAHOF) will celebrate its 50th Anniversary by honoring Oklahomans Johnny Bench (Choctaw) and Sam Bradford (Cherokee) during its April 28, 2023, induction ceremony. The event will take place at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City, soon to be the permanent home of the AIAHOF.

“It is our hope that by sharing with the world the history of great American Indian athletes past and present, this will encourage Native youth in their journey for success whether it be through sports or other areas of achievement,” said David Powless (Oneida) AIAHOF board president and 2008 inductee.

The 2023 inductees join the ranks of prestigious Indigenous athletes including Olympians Billy Mills (Oglala Lakota) and Jim Thorpe (Sac and Fox), Sonny Sixkiller (Cherokee), John Levi (Arapaho) and Moses Yellow Horse (Pawnee). Every athlete honored by induction is selected based on an outstanding, colorful, exciting and action punctuated record of performance. The AIAHOF has 110 inductees.

“We are excited to welcome the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame to First Americans Museum,” said James Pepper Henry (Kaw), FAM Director/CEO. He says the ceremony is the first step in a two-year process to relocate the AIAHOF from its current location at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. “Although FAM focuses on the 39 Tribal Nations in Oklahoma today, this merger helps us move to a national level to be more reflective of all Tribal communities nationwide.”

2023 AIAHOF Inductees:

Johnny Bench was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on December 7, 1947 and grew up in the small town of Binger, OK. His childhood dream was to become a major league baseball player. He was selected and signed in the 1965 amateur draft by the Cincinnati Reds. After two seasons in the minors, Bench made Cincinnati's Major League roster for the 1968 season. This marked the beginning of one of the most successful careers in baseball.

Elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in January 1989 with the fourth highest percentage of total votes cast, Bench is undoubtedly the greatest catcher ever. His honors include National League Rookie of the Year (1968), National League Most Valuable Player (1970 & 1972), World Series MVP (1976), 14-time All-Star, with 10 Gold Gloves. In 1980, Bench set an endurance record by catching 100 or more games for 13 consecutive seasons. He is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation.

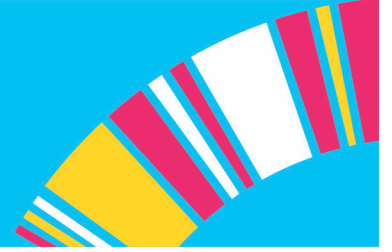
Samuel J. Bradford was born and raised in Oklahoma City. He attended Putnam City schools and graduated from Putnam City North High School in 2006 where he was a multi-sport athlete. He received a football scholarship from the University of Oklahoma. He was an All American and Heisman Trophy winning quarterback while at OU. He enjoyed a nine-year career in the NFL after being selected #1 in the 2010 NFL Draft and being named Rookie of the Year. Along the way he set several NCAA and NFL passing records and met many outstanding people, teammates, and coaches. He married Emma Lavy of Fayetteville Arkansas in 2016. Today, they are busy parents with three beautiful children. He is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

Sponsorship opportunities for the 2023 AIAHOF Induction Ceremony are currently available. Please contact jillianh@famok.org for more details.

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About American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame

The American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame stands as a historical record and tribute to the abilities of Indian athletes and as inspiration for Indian youth seeking to develop rewarding and productive lives. The Hall of Fame was incorporated as a non-profit organization in August 1972 in the State of Kansas. It is supported by private donations.



About First Americans Museum

The mission of FAM is to educate the broader public about the unique cultures, diversity, history, and contributions of the 39 Tribal Nations in Oklahoma today. The 175,000 square foot facility showcases state-of-the-art exhibitions in history, culture, and art; live public and education programs; a full-service restaurant presenting unique Native inspired cuisine; and a museum store featuring one-of-a-kind hand-made items created by Oklahoma's premier Native American artists.