

Football Standouts Top '09 Hall of Fame Class

By **MARCUS HARTMAN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The member of the 2009 Ohio State Athletic Hall of Fame class who had to wait the longest for induction had no complaints about the delay. In fact, Pandel Savic was downright modest when asked about the topic.

"They looked at me I think for more than just football perhaps," he told BSB.

In Savic's case, there was plenty to look for in both regards. He joined a star-filled class of '09 inductees that includes fellow former football players Dick LeBeau, Neal Colzie and Andy Katzenmoyer; basketball star Michael Redd; track standout Robert Gary; and NCAA champion swimmer Bob Hopper.

Female athletes to be inducted later this year are All-America rower Kaja Fiserova, two-time All-America golfer Alison Hanna, three-time All-America field hockey player Vanessa Immordino and OSU women's ice hockey pioneer Emma Laaksonen.

Also set to be honored is longtime coach Jim Montrella, who led the Ohio State women's swimming program from 1980 to 1997.

After finishing his Buckeye football career in January 1950, Savic went on to help found the Memorial Tournament and chair the annual golf event for nearly 30 years. In those capacities, Savic served as right-hand man for fellow Ohio State alumnus Jack Nicklaus, an inaugural member of the OSU Hall of Fame and one of the greatest golfers of all time.

Downplaying Savic's football contribu-

tions at Ohio State would be a mistake, however.

Though World War II delayed his career three years, Savic wound up a three-year starter at quarterback for head coach Wes Fesler. He led the team in passing in 1948 and '49 and led the Buckeyes to a 17-14 victory over California in the 1950 Rose Bowl.

That marked a three-year run of improvement for Savic and his classmates, many of whom were also WWII veterans. The Buckeyes won only two games in 1947, six in '48 and seven in '49.

Despite the Rose Bowl victory, Savic and his teams were quickly overshadowed by the accomplishments of Heisman Trophy winners Vic Janowicz in 1950 and Howard "Hopalong" Cassady in 1955.

"I was a pretty steady guy," Savic said. "I knew what to do with the team that I had, including winning the Rose Bowl and being Big Ten co-champs with Michigan."

Citing his immigration to Girard, Ohio, from Macedonia at age 9, his aforementioned accomplishments on the Ohio State gridiron and with the Memorial Tournament, plus many years running a successful business, Savic said he could not disagree with the title of a story longtime Columbus Dispatch sportswriter Paul Hornung once penned about him titled, "The American Dream Fulfilled."

"I've had a wonderful life," Savic said, "and perhaps with this bit from my making the Hall of Fame, that American dream will be fulfilled a little more."

LeBeau followed Savic at Ohio State by six years, becoming a star halfback for head coach Woody Hayes from 1956-58, a span



FILE PHOTO

BIG KAT – Former Ohio State linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer had a storied career as a Buckeye, recording 12 sacks as a freshman in 1996, winning a Rose Bowl the same year and taking home the Butkus Award in 1997. Katzenmoyer is one of 12 members elected to the 2009 Ohio State Athletic Hall of Fame.

that also included a Rose Bowl victory as well as the 1957 national championship.

LeBeau, too, has gone on to a long, distinguished career in professional sports, but he stayed with the pigskin. The London, Ohio, native has spent the past 50 years in the NFL, a time in which he has coordinated two Super Bowl winning defenses and invented a feared defensive style known as the zone blitz.

The same blitzing craze that engulfed the NFL in the 1990s also spilled over into the college game, perhaps at the perfect time for another member of the Hall of Fame class of '09.

Blitzing was one of Katzenmoyer's specialties. He burst on the scene with 12 sacks in 1996, setting school records for a linebacker and a freshman that have not been broken. The Buckeyes concluded that season with a Rose Bowl win. "The Big Kat" later won the 1997 Butkus Award as the nation's top linebacker before leaving school a year early to enter the 1999 NFL draft.

Also no stranger to instant success was Redd, who began his collegiate career one year after Katzenmoyer.

The Columbus West product led the Big Ten in scoring as a freshman in 1998 and was named the league's top first-year player. A year later, he was one of the catalysts for the Buckeyes' surprise run to the Final Four.

Now an all-star for the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks and an Olympic gold medalist, Redd expressed surprise at his selection.

"You can never imagine being in the Ohio State Hall of Fame, especially being so young," he told BSB. "It's just amazing how you're recognized and honored in that fashion. This is a huge thing for me. I'm really, really proud of it and really humbled by the fact that I'm in there."

Growing up an Ohio State fan makes the honor even more special to him.

"It's just amazing coming from the west side of Columbus to where I am now," Redd said. "It makes it even more gratifying, the fact that I grew up an Ohio State fan. Now making the Hall of Fame means a lot."

While Redd said he splits his time during the offseason between homes in Columbus and Milwaukee, another of the new inductees has roots firmly planted in Ohio's capital city.

Gary's commitment to Ohio State is hard to question since the former Big Ten champion in the steeplechase and the 3,000-meter run has served as a coach of at least one sport at his alma mater for more than a decade.

In that time, he has also competed in two Olympics, but he remains an important part of the OSU coaching community, first as mentor of the men's cross country program since 1996 and then adding the title of men's track and field head coach in 2006.

"To represent your country is fantastic, and I think right behind that is representing the university that you went to and one that you also work at still," Gary said. "I've been here for 18 or 19 years as a student-athlete and then as a coach, so I'm starting to have been here longer than anywhere else. It's exciting."

He hopes next time he is associated with the Hall of Fame, it is because one of his athletes has been tapped for induction.

"That was one of my goals when I was applying for the job," Gary said. "That was something I wanted to do, and I'd certainly love to be here that long to have some athletes end up doing it. I'm pretty lucky to be in my dream job, so it would be quite an honor to have someone that I coached also go in to start closing the gap in the generations."

Laaksonen is a three-time Olympian for Finland. Her No. 3 is the only number to be retired for Ohio State women's ice hockey, and she will be the first player from her sport to be inducted into the OSU Hall of Fame.

"Being a Buckeye is very special to me and what makes it so are the great people involved with Ohio State," Laaksonen said. "Being inducted to a Hall of Fame with a group of such great athletes is unbelievable and a great honor."

The class will be officially inducted in two separate ceremonies Sept. 25 and intro-

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The following are thumbnail sketches of the newest OSU Athletic Hall of Fame inductees.

Men's Hall of Fame Inductees

Neal Colzie, football (1972-74) – An All-American and two-time, first-team All-Big Ten selection, Colzie remains in the school's top 10 for interceptions in a season and career, interception yards in a game, interception returns for a touchdown in a season and career, career punt return yards, punt returns in a game, season and career, and punt returns for touchdowns in a season and career. Colzie remains the record holder for punt return yards in a game (170) and season (679), both set in 1973. A first-round draft selection in 1975, Colzie went on to a nine-season pro career in which he played for Oakland, Miami and Tampa Bay. In his first season, he recorded 655 punt return yards, an NFL rookie record. He helped lead the Raiders to a win in Super Bowl XI, and concluded his professional football career with the Orlando Renegades in the USFL. Colzie died of a heart attack in 2001 at the age of 48.

Robert Gary, cross country/track (1992-95) – The six-event All-American Gary won the Big Ten outdoor 3,000-meter steeplechase title in 1994 and still holds the Ohio State and Big Ten records in the 3,000 meters. A three-time All-Big Ten selection and member of three Big Ten championship teams, Gary went on to compete on three U.S. World Championship distance teams, qualifying for 12 U.S. world cross country teams, and competed in the 1996 and 2004 Olympic Games in the 3,000-meter steeplechase. Gary became men's cross country head coach in 1996 and took over the men's track program in 2006. All three of Gary's Ohio State teams enjoyed historic seasons in 2007-08 as the cross country, indoor and outdoor track and field teams each finished in the top three at their respective conference meets for the first time in more than 65 years.

Bob Hopper, swimming (1965-67) – Hopper, a three-time All-American, won the 1965 NCAA championship in the 200-yard individual medley with a time of 1:51.8. He also was a two-time Big Ten champion in the event, winning the title in both 1965 (1:59.91) and 1966 (1:59.9). Hopper is the

last Buckeye to win the event in either the Big Ten or NCAA championships.

Andy Katzenmoyer, football, (1996-98) – Katzenmoyer won the Butkus Award in 1997, the first Ohio State linebacker to win the award that goes to the best player at that position in college football. A three-time, first-team All-Big Ten honoree, Katzenmoyer put up big numbers, ranking in the top 10 in the school record books for career solo tackles; tackles for loss in a game, in a season and career; quarterback sacks in a game, season and career; and career interception returns for touchdowns. A member of the 1997 Rose Bowl champion Buckeyes, Katzenmoyer was selected in the first round of the 1999 NFL draft by the New England Patriots but suffered a neck injury in his first season that cut his professional career short.

Dick LeBeau, football, (1956-58) – LeBeau was a three-time letter winner for Hayes and was a star halfback on the 1957 national championship team. He went on to a 14-year playing career with the Detroit Lions, where he set the NFL record for consecutive starts for a cornerback (171). He is tied for seventh all-time in the NFL with 62 career interceptions and appeared in three Pro Bowls. His 36 years of professional coaching include assistant stints in Cincinnati, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Green Bay and Pittsburgh, including Super Bowl wins with the 2005 and 2008 Steelers. He was head coach of the Bengals for two-plus seasons and as defensive coordinator of that team developed the revolutionary "zone blitz."

Michael Redd, basketball, (1998-2000) – The Columbus native was named 1998 Big Ten Freshman of the Year, was a three-time Ohio State MVP and last summer helped Team USA win a gold medal in the Beijing Olympics. Redd, who averaged 35.1 minutes a game during his time with the Buckeyes, ended his career fifth in program history in scoring with 1,879 points and is third in the Ohio State record book for career points in the NCAA tournament (133). A team captain in 2000, Redd was named All-Big Ten and later drafted in the 2000 NBA draft by Milwaukee. He was an NBA All-Star in 2004 and is fifth on the Bucks' all-time scoring list. Redd holds the NBA record for most three-point field goals made in one quarter with eight, set in the fourth period of a 2002 game against the Houston Rockets.

Pandel Savic, football, (1947-49) – The Ohio State passing leader in 1948 and 1949,

Savic helped the '49 Buckeyes to the school's first Rose Bowl win. In that game, he gained only 16 total yards rushing and passing, but that included an important 6-yard run to close out the remaining time and seal the Buckeyes' win over California. The '49 team won a share of the Big Ten title with Savic throwing for 581 yards and six touchdowns on the season. Savic went on to play an important role in the golf community, serving as longtime chairman of the Memorial Tournament.

Women's Hall of Fame Inductees

Kaja Fiserova, rowing, (2001-03) – Fiserova was the 2002 team MVP and led the Buckeyes to the program's first Big Ten championship that year. She was a 2003 first-team CRCA All-American, a two-time, first-team All-Central Region honoree and a first-team All-Big Ten selection. She was also a two-time CRCA National Scholar-Athlete and Academic All-Big Ten honoree as well as three-time Ohio State Scholar-Athlete. Additionally, Fiserova was a member of the Czech Rowing Team from 1995 to 2000, participating in the world championships and world regattas.

Allison Hanna, golf, (2000-04) – A two-time All-American, Hanna was the 2001 Big Ten Freshman of the Year as well as the Big Ten Player of the Year and Ohio State Female Athlete of the Year in 2004. She was a three-time, first-team All-Big Ten selection and won the 2003 Big Ten individual championship. Hanna, a two-time team captain, was a three-time Academic All-Big Ten selection and a four-time Ohio State Scholar-Athlete. A member of the All-NCAA West Regional Team in 2004, Hanna ended her career with the lowest scoring average (72.58) in program history. She turned professional in 2004 and posted her best LPGA finish with fourth place at the 2006 Sybase Classic.

Vanessa Immordino, field hockey, (2000-03) – Three-time All-American Immordino finished her career in the top five in the OSU record books in career points (127) and career goals (52) as well as single-season points with 54 as a senior. She also was a three-time, first-team All-Big Ten selection and a three-time, first-team West Region All-American, and a 2003 finalist for the Women's National Field Hockey Player of the Year award. Immordino was captain of the Buckeyes as a senior, and she ended her career as one of five Ohio State players

to record 100 career points and led the team in goals three seasons.

Emma Laaksonen, ice hockey, (2000-04) – The 2004 Western Collegiate Hockey Association Student-Athlete of the Year, Laaksonen helped build the foundation of the Ohio State women's hockey program and is the first women's hockey player to be inducted into the Athletics Hall of Fame. She was the first player in program history to be named an All-American, earning second-team honors in 2002, and her other career accomplishments include being a 2002 Patty Kazmaier Memorial Award finalist and earning second-team All-WCHA honors in 2004. A standout in the classroom, Laaksonen was a two-time CoSIDA Academic All-District honoree, a two-time American Women's Hockey Coaches Association Scholar All-American and a three-time WCHA All-Academic Team selection. She has been a key member for her home country's team in Finland as a three-time Olympian, serving as co-captain in 2002 and 2006 as well as competing in seven world championships, serving as captain in 2008 and '09. Named Finland's player of the year in 2002 and 2006, Laaksonen was recognized by the Buckeye program during the first home series of the 2008-09 season when her No. 3 was the first women's hockey number ever retired.

Jim Montrella, women's swim coach, (1980-97) – Montrella earned Big Ten Coach of the Year honors in 1985 and 1991 and led the Buckeyes to five consecutive conference championships from 1982 to '86. He had 48 swimmers recognized as All-Americans during his 17 years at the helm and coached 66 Big Ten individual champions, five Big Ten Swimmer of the Year honorees, two Ohio State Athletes of the Year and one NCAA champion. Fifty of his swimmers earned Academic All-Big Ten honors, with five receiving the prestigious Big Ten Medal of Honor. Nine of his swimmers have been inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame, including Holly Humphrey, the 1994 Ohio NCAA Woman of the Year and a top 10 finalist for the NCAA woman of the year award. Montrella was head or assistant coach for more than 20 USA National Swimming Teams and served as a member of the USA Swimming Olympic International Operating Committee from 1972 to 1996.

BSB staff writer Jeff Svoboda contributed to this report.



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