

Keeping up with Jones

Track star Reggie Jones doesn't brag about his accomplishments.

MARK CONSTANTINE
THE SAGINAW NEWS

In 1973 he led Saginaw High to its first state track championship in 24 years.

A year later the 6-foot-4, 180-pound athlete dazzled everyone at the NCAA Division I National Finals, winning the 100-yard dash and taking second in the 220, earning him the Most Outstanding Athlete of the meet honor as a member of the University of Tennessee men's track team.

His team, by the way, captured the NCAA championship.

By the time his collegiate athletic career was finished, he'd helped his team set a world record in the 800-meter relay, set school records in the 100-yard and 100-meter dashes as well as the 220-yard and 200-meter runs and was a nine-time All-American.

But, wait, there's more.

He was his college team's captain, voted the squad's most outstanding athlete twice and beat then-reigning Olympic champion Valery Borzov in the 100 and 200

"I've been around him since 1986, and you can count on one hand the number of times Reggie has talked about himself."

CHARUE BATTLE
teacher, co-worker of Reggie Jones

meters in a meet between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The athlete who accomplished all of the above is 48-year-old Saginaw native Reggie Jones.

Jones will meet some old friends when he returns to Saginaw this fall from his home in Memphis, Tenn., for induction into the first class of the Saginaw County Sports Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony for the 11 athletes and one team in the inaugural class will take place Sat-

urday, Oct. 26 at Saginaw Valley State University's Curtiss Hall.

Jones was in a class by himself on the track, but nearly 30 years later ask the youngsters in his classes or fellow teachers at Hillcrest High School in Memphis, Tenn., and you won't hear a word about his athletic exploits.

That's because the longtime Hillcrest teacher and coach doesn't say a word about what he did "back in the day." Instead, he's more concerned what he can do today for the young people he interacts with on a daily basis.

"I don't talk about myself because that's something (Saginaw High track coach) Claude Marsh taught us," Jones recalled. "He not only trained us, he taught us about life and how it's all about the children. I was the child then, now I'm the teacher giving back a little of what Claude Marsh gave to me."

"It (his athletic career) was good while it lasted, but it's over and it's time to move on. People forget. Like General George Patton once said, old heroes never die, they just fade away."

Or, in Jones' case, they commit themselves to teaching young people, concentrating on them and not

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Claims to Fame

Every Sunday through Oct. 20, The Saginaw News will feature a member of the inaugural class of the Saginaw County Sports Hall of Fame.

The schedule of stories:

- Aug. 4 1973 Arthur Hill football team
- Aug. 11 Bob Buhl
- Aug. 18 Bob Devaney
- Aug. 25 Reggie Jones
- Sept. 1 Kid Lavigno
- Sept. 8 Al Luplow
- Sept. 15 Terry McDaniel
- Sept. 22 Ted Petoskey
- Sept. 29 Dick Rittenberg
- Oct. 6 Ernie Thompson
- Oct. 13 Bill Watson
- Oct. 20 Curt Young

Induction ceremonies and banquet are Oct. 26 at Saginaw Valley State University's Curtiss Hall. For more information or tickets call Don Bethune at 793-4708 or Jim McGovern at 781-8815.



THE SAGINAW NEWS FILE

Reggie Jones, a standout at Saginaw High in the early 1970s, led the Trojans to a state championship in 1973 and then went on to become a nine-time all-American sprinter at the University of Tennessee.



UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE FILE PHOTO

Reggie Jones, a 1973 Saginaw High graduate, went on to attain all-American status at the University of Tennessee and is now a teacher and coach at Hillcrest High School in Memphis, Tennessee.

JONES

He wouldn't change a thing

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what he did in the past.

"I don't know him as a world-class athlete, but as a successful basketball coach and a great teacher," said Hillcrest Guidance Counselor James Greer, who has worked alongside Jones for nearly two decades.

"How about that? Nine-time All-American and he doesn't even talk about it. He's just so modest. He's too busy with his jobs here to worry about the past."

Carolyn Hawkins-Shaw is the principal at Hillcrest and she also was clueless when it came to Jones' past.

"I'm not sure many people around know much about his background in athletics," she said. "I'll be honest, I know him in his capacity as a technology teacher, a girls basketball coach and a girls track coach."

"I know he is a fantastic teacher. He is an excellent motivator, too, as a coach. And he cares for his young ladies, he's always keeping up with them to make sure they are doing well in school and at home."

"Reggie is one of those people who goes above and beyond the call of duty."

Charlie Battle's duties have included coaching and teaching alongside Jones the past 16 years, although this year he moved on to Kirby Middle School, which feeds students to Hillcrest.

"Reggie Jones is not his best subject," Battle said about the man he first met in 1986 and has remained friends with since. "I've been around him since 1986, and you can count on one hand the number of times Reggie has talked about himself."

"He is a great coach. He's taken a girls program at Hillcrest that was a doormat and turned them into a team that has played for the city championship the last two years. He is one of the most successful girls basketball coaches in the state."

"The girls just love him, too. They look up to him like a father."

But don't try telling those girls anything about his storied past. It doesn't work, Jones said with a loud laugh.

"Every now and then I mention

to the kids a little about myself, just for motivation, and they invariably end up laughing, especially when I try to demonstrate something," he added. "So I just let one of the girls demonstrate and it works out better."

Jones continues to work out to stay in shape, but his days of running 100 yards in less than 10 seconds are gone. Instead, he runs three miles at least four times a week, throwing in a "100-yard sprint" every now and then just for old times sake.

Would Jones like to still be sprinting today, nearly 30 years after leading Tennessee to the national title in 1974? That would mean millions of dollars in endorsement deals ala Carl Lewis and Michael Johnson.

"Everybody has their time. I had mine," Jones said. "Sure, track runners today make millions. When I started running at Tennessee they had just done away with professional track. But everything is done for a reason."

"You have to think about what might have been had I been given a different path. Would I have the same wife? What about my son, Reggie Jr.? I might not have the money to show for what I did back in the day, but I wouldn't change a thing."

"It's all about the children. I'm trying to pass along what I've learned in life. You do for them because they are the future."

Stan Huntsman coached Jones at Tennessee and got to know him well both during and after Jones' explosive athletic career. Huntsman wrote a letter that will be read at the induction ceremonies.

"Your persona has prevailed throughout your life in the field of public education and as a father, husband and friend," Huntsman wrote. "Above all you are a moral and just man who has lived life free of dissipation or uttering a derogatory or profane remark and a life full of loyalty and love."

"You have truly represented Saginaw, the University of Tennessee and the United States of America in the truest sense of 'what an American should be.'" ■

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