



# National Polish-American SPORTS HALL OF FAME

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### **MARK FIDRYCH, ANDY BANACHOWSKI, BOBBY CZYZ, JOE VERDEUR TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE NATIONAL POLISH-AMERICAN SPORTS HALL OF FAME.**

37<sup>TH</sup> CLASS INDUCTION BANQUET SET FOR THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2009, TROY, MI

Former Detroit Tiger rookie sensation Mark Fidrych, long-time UCLA women's volleyball coach Andy Banachowski, WBA and IBF boxing champion Bobby Czyz and former Olympic and NCAA swimming champion Joe Verdeur have been elected into the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame. The election of Fidrych, Banachowski, Czyz, and Verdeur brings the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame roster to 116. Fidrych and Banachowski were elected from the NPASHF national ballot. Czyz and Verdeur were selected by the Hall's Veterans Committee.

**Mark Fidrych**, nicknamed "The Bird" due to his resemblance to a famous Sesame Street character, took the baseball world by storm in 1976. After getting his first start in mid-May, Fidrych went on to compile a 19-9 record, with a 2.34 E.R.A. and 24 complete games. He was selected as the American League's starting All-Star Game pitcher, was named A.L. Rookie of the Year, and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in Cy Young Award balloting. Capturing the imagination of the country with his appearance, simple lifestyle, and on-field antics, Fidrych earned cover appearances on Sports Illustrated, The Sporting News, and Rolling Stone magazine.

**Andy Banachowski** has been head coach of the UCLA woman's volleyball team for the past 42 years. He has been part of 12 volleyball National Championships, including 6 women's titles as head coach, 4 men's titles as assistant coach, and 2 others as a player. In 1972, '74, and '75, Banachowski coached both the men's and women's teams to NCAA titles. For years he was an Olympic advisor, and in 1993 was head coach of the U.S. team for the World University Games that won the silver medal. In 2008, Banachowski coached the Bruins to their 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive 20-win season, bringing his career coaching record to an amazing 1082-292 (.787 winning percentage). He was inducted into the National Volleyball Hall of Fame in 1997.

**Bobby Czyz**, a member of the 1980 U.S. Olympic boxing team, was prevented from competing that year in Moscow due to the U.S. boycott of those games. Passing up numerous college scholarship offers, the 18 year old high school senior from Wanaque, New Jersey instead turned professional, promptly winning his first 20 fights as a middleweight. After moving up in weight, Czyz captured the IBF World Light Heavyweight Title in 1983 and the WBA Cruiserweight Title in 1991. He retired from boxing in 1994, with an impressive won-lost record of 44-8, with 28 knockouts. Following retirement, Czyz worked for the next ten years as a highly respected boxing commentator for the Showtime network.

**Joe Verdeur** was a four-time NCAA All-American swimmer (1946-50) from LaSalle University. Twice named Sport Magazine Swimmer of the Year, Verdeur set 21 American and 19 World records between 1948 and 1950. In 1948, Verdeur was named NCAA "Swimmer of the Year", and also captured a gold medal in the 200m breaststroke at the Summer Olympic Games in London. Legendary sports writer Grantland Rice called Verdeur "the greatest swimmer of the 1<sup>st</sup> half century." He was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 1966.

The Inductees will be honored at the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Induction Banquet on Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, at the American-Polish Cultural Center in Troy, MI. Tickets for the banquet, which begins at 6 p.m., are \$85, and include an open bar and traditional Polish family-style dinner. Tickets can be ordered by calling (313) 407-3300. Information on the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame is available at [www.polishsportshof.com](http://www.polishsportshof.com).