

On Track For Glory

Donahue, Fischer, Kulbel Named To YHS Athletic Hall

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Three top athletes, all of whom found success in track and field, will enter the Yankton High School Athletic Hall of Fame during the YHS All-Sports Recognition next week.

Jack Donahue (Class of 1944), Chris Fischer (Class of 1994) and Jaime Kulbel (Class of 1995) will enter the YHS Hall Thursday evening. The awards night will begin with a reception for the new Hall of Famers and their families at 5:30 p.m. in the YHS Commons, followed by the All-Sports Recognition at 6:30 p.m. at the YHS Theater. A pizza feed will follow the awards recognition.

Here is a look at each of the three individuals, in order of their graduation:

Jack Donahue

ONE OF THE TOP TRACK AND field athletes of the 1940s didn't even compete as a senior. Yet this 1944 graduate left a lasting impression on the Yankton Bucks.

Donahue broke onto the YHS scene as a freshman, competing in football, basketball and track. His success came in the latter sport, where he earned third in the state meet in the pole vault.

"When I was at Central School, the only things we had to do were jump, vault and play marbles," Donahue joked. "That's how my track career started."

As a sophomore, Donahue continued to have success, including a victory in the high jump at the Dakota Relays (now known as the Howard Wood Dakota Relays).

"The Dakota Relays, I always had great success there," he noted.

Donahue's success in track and field continued as a junior, placing in three events at state. That year, he also won the long jump, high jump and pole vault at the Dakota Relays, setting the meet record in the pole vault.

He also had a good showing on the running oval, helping the Bucks to a relay victory in the 880-yard relay.

"I could do a pretty fair job on the relays," Donahue said.

Donahue lettered in football and basketball as a senior, but before he could step on the track again, he made a decision that many others of his generation did: He left Yankton to join the military.

"I had joined the Air Corps Reserves in June of 1943," he said. "I had enough credit to graduate by the end of the first semester, so I took off to join the Air Corps."

Donahue went south to train on the Boeing B-29 Superfortress, a heavy bomber that was introduced that year. The classes were full, which left time in between while waiting to get to the next class.

"We had to wait for classes to open up. When I finished pre-flight at San Antonio, I had quite a layover," he said. "During that time, we had a lot of physical activities."

Donahue was able to hook up with some of his fellow officers for a solid relay squad that competed against teams from other units.

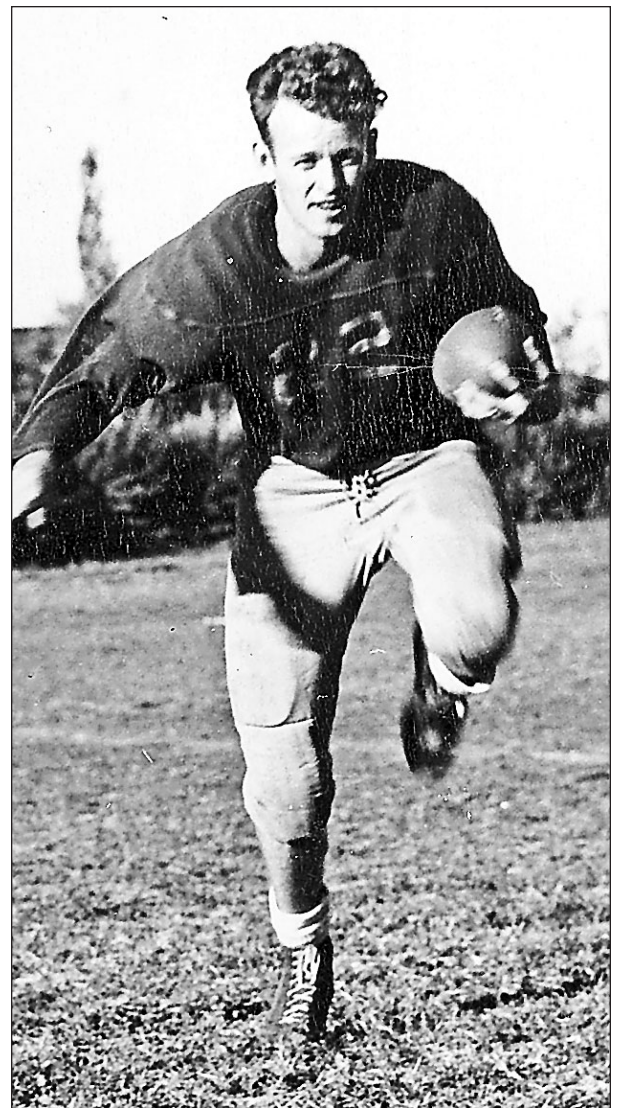
"We placed a lot of relays," he said. "We came up against some mighty powerful runners from other units."



Jaime Kulbel (Class of '95)



Chris Fischer (Class of '94)



Jack Donahue (Class of '44)

By the time Donahue had finished his B-29 training, World War II was over. He was given the option of taking a commission or being discharged. He chose to return to civilian life. He came back to Yankton for college, where he met his wife Arlene.

"I got to go out dancing," he said. "I ended up marrying Miss Pioneer 1946."

Donahue had a long coaching career, first in Pickstown and then Onida, where his teams won two state titles. He retired from teaching and coaching in 1987, and now lives in Silver City, a small town west of Rapid City, with his wife. Through it all, he carried his YHS roots.

"I have always been terribly proud of being a graduate of Yankton High School, of being in the Class of 1944," he said. "A lot of them are gone now, but they're still alive in my heart."

Chris Fischer

THE FASTEST RUNNER in Yankton history was almost a tennis player instead.

Chris Fischer, who still holds Yankton High School records in the 100, 200 and 400, started his running career thanks to some coercion and a little creative scheduling, according to former Yankton track and football coach Jim Milner.

"As a freshman, he was going to be a tennis player and not go out for track. So we had to make arrange-

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Inset: Pamela J. Rezac, President/CEO, EdD, RN

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