

Charles Oliver Inducted into the 2012 Troy University Sports Hall of Fame

Knoxville, Tennessee

Charles Oliver, or Coach O, will go down as one of the most decorated track student-athletes in Troy history, but it isn't just his time as a student-athlete that makes Oliver deserving of a place in the inaugural Troy University Sports Hall of Fame class.

A true champion in every sense of the word, Oliver has been a part of National Championships as a collegiate athlete, a coach, an administrator and as a businessman.

Oliver, who only began running track as a senior at Jordan High School in Columbus, Ga., won a state championship that season in the 400-meter dash, but it was through a common acquaintance that he popped up on the radar of John Anderson, Troy State's track and field coach at the time.

Sam Nader, the football coach at Jordan High School, knew Anderson from their days at Auburn University and told Anderson about a young track star in the making at Jordan that was worth taking a look at.

"I think during his freshman year in Troy, Charlie ran the 400-meter in about 47 seconds," said Anderson. "But the rest, as they say, is history."



Oliver won the 1976 NAIA National Championship in the 400-meter dash and still holds the Troy school record in the event with a blistering time of 45.74 seconds. He also placed fifth at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in Austin, Texas, that season in the 440-yard dash.

"Records are meant to be broken," said Anderson. "But I think Charlie's record in the 400-meter is going to sit for a while."

Oliver was also a part of a 4x400-meter relay team that finished second at the 1973 NAIA Championships with a then-school record time of 3:09.9 minutes and a 4x100-meter relay team that set a then-school record of 41.2 seconds in 1976 at the Princeton Relays.

"Charlie had a great attitude," Anderson said. "That was his key to success. He had a great attitude and he figured out how to run fast and win. He was just that plain and simple."

After his career at Troy State, Oliver was ranked among the top-10 in the country by Track & Field News in 1974, 1976 and 1980.

Oliver returned to Troy State in 1980 as a graduate assistant track and field coach, and was named the program's head coach a season later. Before he left Troy State in 1988, Coach O's teams won seven Gulf South Conference track championships, Oliver was named Coach of the Year seven times and 26 athletes won All-America honors.

Coach O's success attracted the attention of the University of Tennessee where he was on the staffs that won National Championships as a track and field assistant coach and as a member of the football event management staff.

Oliver's roots in Troy are still prominent today as he currently sponsors the Coach O Cross Country Invitational and the Coach O Track & Field Invitational each year at Troy.

He is also a successful businessman, founding Bags by Coach O in 1989, and is heavily involved in supporting grassroots track and field programs for kids. Oliver is a member of the Theta Phi Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, where he was one of 20 brothers of the charter line that brought the first black fraternity to the Troy State campus.

Oliver now resides in Knoxville, Tenn., where he runs his Bags by Coach O business. Oliver and his wife Jessie have two sons, Charles III and Alexander, a daughter in law, Denise and a grandson, Kristian.