



Since we were founded in 1949, Hughston Clinic has sought to provide the most advanced orthopedic services available to men, women and children of all ages and all walks of life. Today, Hughston Clinic comprises a number of leading institutions for the diagnosis and treatment of orthopedic conditions, as well as orthopedic research, education and training.

Why go anywhere else? Come to the experts, come to Hughston.

David P. Antekeier, MD

Champ L. Baker III, MD

John D. Dorchak, MD

Patrick J. Fernicola, MD

Fred Flandry, MD, FACS

Ryan M. Geringer, DO

David M. Gloystein, MD

Gil Gomez, DO

Garland K. Gudger, Jr., MD

Kurt E. Jacobson, MD, FACS

David H. MacDonald, DO

James E. McGrory, MD

Douglas W. Pahl, MD

Brent A. Ponce, MD, FAOA

David C. Rehak, MD

Randall J. Ruark, MD

Matthew G. Stewart, MD

Michael M. Tucker, Jr., MD

John I. Waldrop, MD

B. Collier Watson, DO

L. Erik Westerlund, MD, FACS

Derek A. Woessner, MD, FAAFP

6262 Veterans Parkway | Columbus, GA 31909 | 706-324-6661 | hughston.com



Columbus and the Valley

MAY-JUNE 2023

BY BRETT BUCKNER
PHOTOS BY GERALD SAUNDERS

Back on the Right Track

LOCAL TRACK AND FIELD LEGEND
COACH CHARLIE OLIVER RETURNS
HOME FOR TRACK MEET AT
RENOVATED KINNETT STADIUM

When meeting a local legend, introductions often lack formality.

"Just call me Coach O," said the genial voice on the other end of the phone, "everyone does."

That voice belongs to none other than famed track and field athlete and coach—not to mention Columbus native—Charles Oliver, or simply Coach O.

"We've done a pretty good job of branding," he said, laughing. "Even now, when someone comes up to me and says, 'Charles' I'm like ... 'Are you talking to me?'"

"I'm pretty much Coach O to everybody these days."

Coach O, who lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, returned to Columbus recently to promote the Coach O Invitational. Hosted by the West Georgia Jets, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) sponsored event was held on April 22 with the simple goal of promoting local track and field athletes.

"We have been working for nearly a decade to host an event with Coach O and to finally have it come to fruition was incredible," said Merri Sherman, executive director for the Columbus Georgia Sports Council. "Coach O is highly respected for his role within the track-and-field community and having the opportunity to work with him and him being willing to put his name and reputation on this event is priceless."



MAY-JUNE 2023

Columbus and the Valley

33

While there's been a desire to host this type of event, the issue was access to a suitable venue. But that all changed with the renovations to Kinnett Stadium.

"It's now the perfect facility for a track and field event that will attract top talent to compete," Sherman said. "We are expecting several All-Americans and national champions for this inaugural event, which will grow each year."

Because registration was still ongoing prior to publication, Sherman couldn't speculate on the potential financial impact the Coach O Invitational might have.

By comparison, the 2022 GHSA State Track and Field Championships that were held at Kinnett Stadium brought in more than \$850,000 to the local economy.

The meet is for runners of all ages from 5 years old to adult. "It's all about helping them develop," Coach O said. "Even for the adults, it's a chance to prove that it's never too late."

Coach O knows a little something about late starts.

Growing up on 5th Avenue in Columbus, he used to run in block track meets where he'd race against kids who lived on other streets.

"Every time I entered a relay race," Coach O remembered, "I came in last place. Every. Single. Time."

Coach O didn't start running seriously until March of his

"A track meet is about more than running and jumping. It's an opportunity also to provide positive leadership to kids."

-Coach Charles Oliver

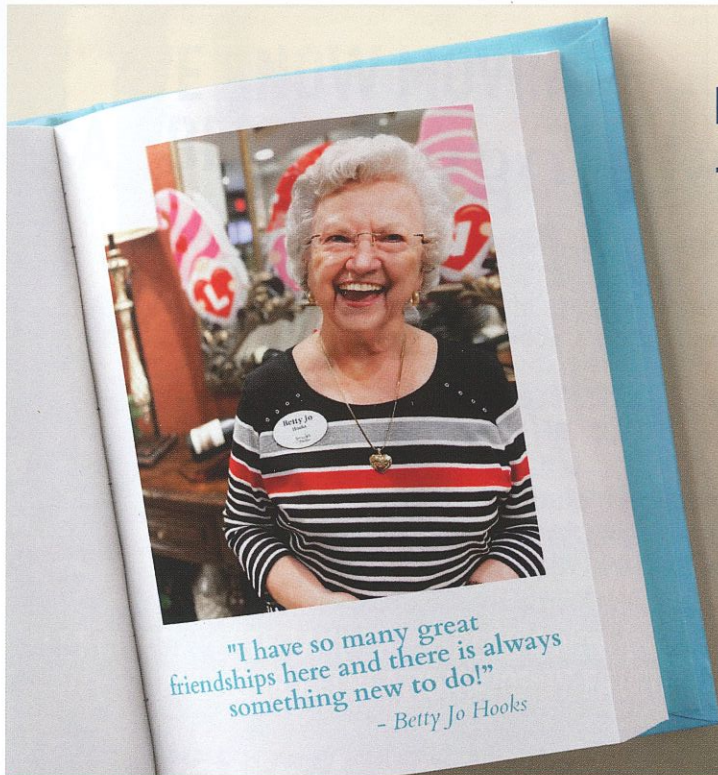
"Regardless of visitor spending estimations," she said, "the event will still have a positive impact on the community."

As for Coach O, he's hoping this is the first in a long-running partnership with his hometown.

"I want to see this meet grow to encompass even more kids," he said. "A track meet is about more than running and jumping. It's an opportunity also to provide positive leadership to kids."

senior year in 1972 at Jordan High School. He tried out for the fourth spot on the team. It came down to Coach O and a childhood friend—the same friend who always beat him in those neighborhood races.

"For some reason, the coach picked me because he saw something in me," Coach O said. "That put me on the right track for the rest of my life."



LETTING OUR RESIDENTS TELL THEIR OWN STORY.

Expect more out of retirement! To learn more about Spring Harbor's greatest gifts – friendships and vibrant living, call (706) 786-4260 or visit SpringHarborSeniorLiving.org/blog/bettys-story to read Betty's story.

Spring
AT GREEN ISLAND *Harbor*



100 Spring Harbor Drive

Columbus, GA 31904



That year, he won the state championship after an undefeated season and had the fastest 400-meter time in all four divisions in Georgia. His 48.8 still stands as a school record.

After high school, Coach O attended Troy University (formerly Troy State) where he won the 1976 NAIA National Championship in the 400-meter dash with a record-setting time of 45.74 seconds.

Oliver was an alternate on the 1976 and 1980 United States Olympic teams and was ranked among the top-10 in the country by "Track & Field News" in 1974, 1976 and 1980.

"It's been said a few times, but I was not an Olympian," Coach O clarified. "I was an alternate and competed in two Olympic trials, but I never got to go to the Olympics."

Oliver returned to Troy in 1980 as a graduate assistant track and field coach and was named head coach the next season. His teams won seven Gulf South Conference track championships. Coach O was named Coach of the Year seven times, and 26 athletes won All-America honors. He was inducted as a member of Troy University's inaugural Sports Hall of Fame class in 2012.



Coach O during his Troy State (now Troy University) years

Coach Oliver became a member of the University of Tennessee's track and field coaching staff in 1988. During his tenure, the team won SEC indoor and outdoor championships and produced numerous All-American athletes. The team also won the NCAA National Championship in 1991. Coach O remained on the university administrative staff until 2009.

Coastalogy

(n) coa·stal·o·gy

The study of matching your lifestyle to the perfect beach house on Florida's Scenic Hwy 30A.

Connect with me to get started!



Sallie Kirkland Paris

Luxury Home Specialist

m 850.586.1981

sallie.paris@corcorangroup.com

corcoran

REVERIE

5410 E Co Hwy 30A, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

Corcoran® and the Corcoran Logo are registered service marks owned by Corcoran Group LLC. Corcoran Group LLC fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act. Each office is independently owned and operated



Organizers of the meet (L-R) Merri Sherman, executive director, Columbus, Georgia Sports Council, Coach O, Marcus McGinty, meet director AAU, David Boyd, event manager, Columbus, Georgia Sports Council gathered to discuss the upcoming event at Kinnett Stadium.

After coaching, Coach O transitioned into the business world while staying true to his track and field roots.

He's the CEO and founder of Coach O Enterprises, which serves track and field in three ways—Bags by Coach O, Coach O Registration and Coach O Event Management. He's also Second Vice President and National Chair for the AAU.

After a lifetime of running races and coaching athletes, Coach O knows that there are countless lessons that can be learned on the track that having nothing to do with the finish line.

"Everyone can't be a star or win first place," he said. "A kid may come out, and he's always coming in last. But all that time, he's learning about teamwork, about discipline, motivation and interacting with others."

That kid is going to grow up.

"One day, you might go in for surgery and that kid is your doctor," Coach O said. "He's the last face you see. But he learned about drive and hard work, and he never gave up when it got tough, even though he always came in last." ©

WE KNOW MOVING CAN BE **STRESSFUL...**



LET OUR EXPERTS TAKE THE STRESS AWAY AND HELP MAKE YOUR RELOCATION WORRY-FREE!



**TWO MEN
AND A
TRUCK**

"Movers Who Care."

1421 BELFAST AVENUE
COLUMBUS, GA 31904
706-494-6683
TWO MEN AND A TRUCK COLUMBUS GA.COM



Columbus
Memory=MC²
Center

Home of the **Free** Memory Number,
The Only Vital Sign for Brain Health!

Together we will end Alzheimer's and Dementia!

Stop by our office for your memory number.
7196 North Lake Drive, Suite A, Columbus GA 31909

columbusmemorycenter.com