

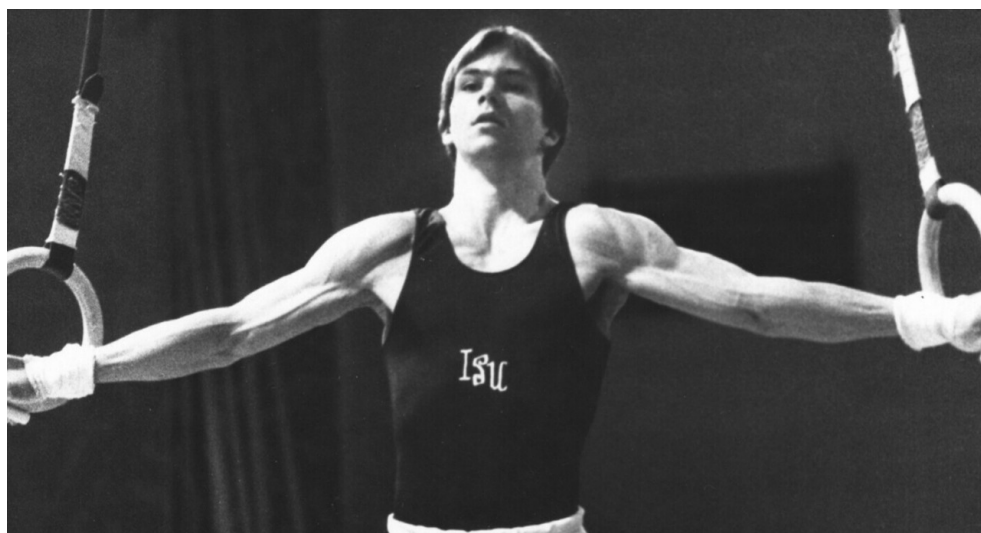
From: University Communication
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 12:40 PM
Subject: ISU Today: Remembering Kurt Thomas



Monday, June 8, 2020

Produced by University Communication | [@IndStateU_News](#)

WE ARE
#SYCAMORESTRONG



"We had the opportunity to visit with Kurt and [his wife] Beckie back in December. He was such a kind and humble person."

—ISU President Deborah Curtis in a June 9 interview with the Tribune-Star

Video Archive: Kurt Thomas
 halftime feature



Sycamores IN THE MEDIA

Sycamores pay tribute to Indiana State Hall of Fame gymnast Kurt Thomas

Sycamores are mourning the passing of Kurt Thomas, the first U.S. male world champion gymnast who led Indiana State University to the 1977 national championship.

Reactions — and memories — were shared over the weekend at the news of his death.

"This evening I share the sorrow of our Sycamore family as we mourn the loss of Kurt Thomas," ISU President Deborah Curtis said in a tweet Saturday. "He represented his university and country with professionalism and class. We will honor his legacy later this year. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his wife Beckie and their family."

Thomas died Friday after a stroke on May 24 caused by a tear of the basilar artery in the brain stem, according to the Associated Press. He was 64.

While at Indiana State, he won five individual NCAA championships in men's gymnastics including the parallel bars and all-around in 1977 and parallel bars, horizontal bar, and the all-



[Indiana State's Kurt Thomas, gymnast denied 1980 glory, dies](#)

Indianapolis Star

"[Kurt] Thomas, born in Hollywood, Fla., did not come from affluence. He was one of four children, and his father died when he was 7.

"He was a latecomer to the sport. He was introduced to gymnastics as a 4-9, 77-pound freshman at Miami Central High School. The coach wanted football types until he saw what this tiny kid could do on gymnastics apparatus.

"Indiana State flew Thomas in for a recruiting visit — something usually only football players from his high school did — and he accepted a scholarship offer. He told the Sycamores' coach, Roger Council, he would make the 1976 Olympic team. Thomas did so but could not return to that stage in 1980.

"Thomas had a "neurological gift," Council told the Washington Post.

"He's got to be a favorite in Moscow," Council

around in 1979. He graduated from ISU in 1980.

He received All-America honors 13 times in his Sycamore career and was the James E. Sullivan award winner in 1979 for the nation's top amateur athlete.

His accomplishments earned him memberships in the Indiana State Athletics Hall of Fame, the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame, and the Missouri Valley Conference Hall of Fame.

"How sad!" posted David Pittman, '79 on Facebook on Saturday. "I was there at ISU during this period and used to see him in the gym and fitness area (sauna) all the time. He was such a humble and great ambassador for gymnastics and ISU."

Another alumnus, Mark Hauer, '79, said, "A real shocker. I remember all the success he had and how the team performed so brilliantly. I was a student at ISU during that time. Larry Bird was a newcomer. A great era for ISU and Terre Haute."

Read more about Thomas [in this news release](#).

said in a 1979 interview. "He's known the world over now. He is the greatest male gymnast. He knows it and the rest of the world knows it."

The world never got to witness it. Thomas did not express bitterness.

"In my mind and my heart, I knew I was the best at that time," Thomas told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel in 1989.

"He said he could have gone to Moscow "and placed 50th." And Thomas, who once filed for bankruptcy, said he would have blown the money from endorsements.

"This way, he said, "I'm a hero without proving it, a gold medalist without ever doing it."

"He brought innovation and showmanship to gymnastics, and two moves were named for him: the Thomas flair on pommel horse and Thomas salto in floor exercise. When he unveiled the Thomas flair in Barcelona, newspapers in Spain headlined it "The New Gymnastics."

Other coverage: [New York Times](#), [WTHI-TV](#), [The Associated Press](#), [WTWO/WAWV-TV](#), [Tribune-Star](#)

INDIANA STATE RETWEETED



"Kurt will always be remembered as one of the finest student-athletes to ever attend Indiana State University. His accomplishments on a national scale are simply second to none."

—Sherard Clinkscales, ISU Director of Athletics

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Upcoming Events

JUNE 8, 2020

ALL DAY

1st 4-week and 8-week classes start

12:00 P.M.

First Year Start Up

JUNE 9, 2020

12:00 P.M.

First-Year Start Up

[For More Events](#)

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UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATION, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & PROVOST

Greg Goode, Executive Director of Government Relations and University Communication • Greg.Goode@indstate.edu

Mark Alesia, Director of University Communication • Mark.Alesia@indstate.edu

Dianne Frances D. Powell, Associate Director of University Communication • DianneFrances.Powell@indstate.edu

Kelli Cheever, Graphic Designer • Kelli.Cheever@indstate.edu

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