

July 15, 2022

Jim Thorpe reinstated as winner of 1912 Olympic gold medals after being stripped

Jim Thorpe was stripped of his Olympic gold medals after it surfaced that he was paid to play minor league baseball over two summers, a violation of amateur rules

By Louis Casiano

Jim Thorpe was reinstated Friday as the winner of the 1912 Olympic pentathlon and decathlon in Stockholm, more than a century after he was stripped of his gold medals for violating amateur sports rules at the time.

In an announcement, the International Olympic Committee declared Thorpe the winner of the events, which coincided with the 110th anniversary of his decathlon win. King Gustav V of Sweden proclaimed him as "the greatest athlete in the world."

Thorpe, a Native American, returned to a ticker-tape parade in New York, but months later it was discovered he had been paid to play minor league baseball over two summers, an infringement of the Olympic amateurism rules. He was stripped of his gold medals in what was described as the first major international sports scandal.

"We welcome the fact that, thanks to the great engagement of Bright Path Strong, a solution could be found," IOC President Thomas Bach said. "This is a most exceptional and unique situation, which has been addressed by an extraordinary gesture of fair play from the National Olympic Committees concerned."

Thorpe's Native American name, Wa-Tho-Huk, means "Bright Path." He was the first Native American to win an Olympic gold medal for the United States.

In 1982, the IOC gave Thorpe's family duplicate gold medals to his family but his Olympic records were not reinstated, nor was his status as the sole gold medalist of the two events.

In Stockholm, Thorpe tripled the score of his nearest competitor in the pentathlon and had 688 more points than the second-placed finisher in the decathlon.

During the closing ceremony, King Gustav V told Thorpe: "Sir, you are the greatest athlete in the world."



Big Jim Thorpe, famed American athlete and former U.S. Olympic great, center, sets a fast pace for some girls during a "junior olympics" event on Chicago's south side June 6, 1948 sponsored by a V.F.W. post. Jim Thorpe was reinstated as the sole winner of the 1912 Olympic pentathlon and decathlon — nearly 110 years after being stripped of those gold medals for violations of strict amateurism rules of the time. (AP Photo, File)

