



Jim Thorpe: World's Greatest Athlete

Robert W. Wheeler

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Born in 1888 in Oklahoma Territory, Jim Thorpe was a Sac and Fox Indian. After attending the Sac and Fox agency school and Haskell Indian Junior College in Lawrence, Kansas, he transferred to Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. At Carlisle he led the football team to victories over some of the nation's best college teams-Army, Navy, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Pennsylvania, and Nebraska. In 1912 he participated in the Olympic Games in Stockholm, winning both the decathlon and pentathlon. It was then that King Gustav V of Sweden dubbed him "the world's greatest athlete."

Between 1913 and 1919, Thorpe played professional baseball for the New York Giants, the Cincinnati Reds, and the Boston Braves. In 1915 he began playing professional football with the Canton (Ohio) Bulldogs. When the top teams were organized into the American Professional Football Association in 1920, Thorpe was named the first president of the league, which was renamed the National Football League in 1922. Throughout his career he excelled in every sport he played, earning King Gustav's accolade many times over.

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