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Exhibit still open to the public

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CLARK COUNTY CHRONICLE

Exhibit still open to the public

By Wendy Richter

For the Siftings

Time is running out for Clark County area citizens to enjoy a Smithsonian Museum exhibit here in Arkadelphia.

The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service of the Museum on Main Street program and the Arkansas Humanities Council have partnered to bring "Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America" to Ouachita Baptist University.

Additionally, a Youth Access Grant from the Smithsonian provided for additional display materials: "Traditions of Excellence" showcases the history and traditions of area high schools as well as Arkadelphia's two universities. The exhibit is now open in the Mabee Fine Arts Center gallery on the Ouachita campus.

Visitors can learn about the history of athletics at Arkadelphia, Gurdon, Peake, Okolona, Bismarck, Centerpoint, and Ouachita high schools while enjoying photographs of teams from throughout the twentieth century.

Highlights from each school are presented in the exhibit. For example, as background for the Okolona High School images, the exhibit provides some brief history about

the school itself: "Okolona was first settled in the 1830s, and by 1859 an academy served the community's students. A new high school was built across town from that original academy's site in the 1920s. A school for blacks also served the community and was renamed Simmons High School in 1951.

Through the mid-twentieth century, both schools gained students and became centers of education for the surrounding area.

Then, in 1969, Simmons and Okolona consolidated. However, due to economic conditions, the town began to fade. The student population also declined, resulting in the school's closure in the 1980s and pupils attending classes in other towns." Images range from the first girls basketball team to the historic Simmons Gymnasium (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) to the 1907 baseball team to the 1948 senior girls basketball team.

For Ouachita High School, in Hot Spring County, emphasis is on the school's history and its numerous state championships: "Ouachita High School was established when high schools at Friendship and Donaldson were forced to consolidate in 1950.

Geographically quite close, the schools were fierce rivals, especially when it came to basketball. The towns decided to build a new school 2½ miles from each community.

However, facilities were not ready for the 1950-51 school year, and athletes traveled to both schools for practice: the girls teams used one gym while the boys used the other, alternating about every two weeks. In 1951-52 the basketball teams chose green and gold for its colors and an Indian warrior as a mascot.

Since that time, the school has enjoyed much success in a variety of sports, including numerous state championships." Photos of state championship teams ranging from the 1959 and 1970 boys basketball teams to the 2015 baseball team to the 2016 cross country team showcase the school's "Traditions of Excellence."

Legends abound within Arkadelphia High School sports lore. The exhibit includes an image of the 1987 state championship football team that finished with a 14-0 record. The team became Arkansas's first to be ranked in the USA Today Super 25. AHS also earned the title in 1979. Both of those teams

were led by legendary coach John Outlaw, who amassed a 84-20-1 record in nine seasons at Arkadelphia.

The school also enjoyed tremendous success in volleyball during the 1980s. Led by Coach Rhonda Thigpen, the Badgers dominated Arkansas volleyball during that decade, winning state titles during that decade in 1982, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988 and 1989, and coming in second in 1983 and 1987. Also included is an image of the Lady Badgers basketball team with player Lee Dodson, who left an indelible mark on high school basketball in Arkansas. Dodson filed a lawsuit in 1977 seeking to allow girls to play the same "full-court" game as boys.

At the time girls played a "half-court" style game, although college women played full-court. She won the decision, and in the fall of 1979 high school girls began to play full-court. Since that time, the Dodson v. Arkansas Activities Association case has been cited by many as among the major decisions invoking the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to mandate equal athletic opportunities for girls.

These are just a few of the stories highlighted in



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE CLARK COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
Members of the 1913 Arkadelphia High School girls basketball team. The team is believed to be the school's first girls basketball team.

the "Traditions of Excellence" portion of the exhibit. A unique part of the display includes interactive panels where visitors can listen to excerpts of interviews with current and past sports personalities, such as professional golfer and HSU grad Ken Duke; OBU football coach Buddy Bob Benson; Arkadelphia High School pep squad member Carolyn Hodges Wood; Okolona High School alum Judy Malcom McCauley; Bismarck High School football and wrestling coach Lewis Jolly; OBU basketball coach

and player Bill Vining; professional baseball player and HSU coach Delores Brumfield White; Mae Whipple, sister of Arkadelphia High School track star Win Whipple; OBU track coach Bob Gravette; and OBU football player Ike Sharp.

The exhibit will remain open through December 8, but will have abbreviated hours during the university's Thanksgiving break. For the schedule or more information on the "Hometown Teams" exhibit contact Kristi Smith at smithk@obu.edu or (870) 245-5119.