

PRESS RELEASE



Volleyball Hall of Fame and Spalding/AAI team up to honor 4 international stars

- Karolyn Kirby – 1992 -1994 FIVB Best Player in the World (USA)
- Seiji Oko – 1972 Olympic Gold Medal Player (Japan)
- Josef Musil – 1964 Olympic Silver Medal player (Czech)

HOLYOKE, Mass. --- Four international greats of volleyball will be honored here in the birthplace of the sport on **Friday, Oct. 15. Karolyn Kirby** of the United States, **Seiji Oko** of Japan, **Josef Musil** of the Czech Republic and **Mireya Luis** of Cuba will be inducted to the **Volleyball Hall of Fame** in an afternoon ceremony.

The Hall's 19th enshrinement will take place at 2 p.m. at the Hall of Fame at 444 Dwight St. in Heritage State Park, immediately following a noon luncheon at the Log Cabin Banquet & Meeting House. Tickets for the luncheon are \$25. Admission to the ceremony is free of charge. Seating for both events is limited.

The Volleyball Hall of Fame Reception and Dinner will be held at the Holyoke Holiday Inn and Holidome beginning at 6 p.m., Oct. 15. Short videos highlighting the inductees' careers in volleyball will be shown. Dinner tickets prices are \$55 per person or \$500 per table of 10.

Spalding and American Athletic, Inc, divisions of Russell Corp., will serve as Title/Tournament Sponsors for the Induction Celebration.

Kirby played 10 seasons (1989-1998) in the Women's Professional Volleyball Association (WPVA)/Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP). She was deemed the "Best Player in the World" by the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) for three straight years (1992-1994) and was named Most Valuable Player of the WPVA four times. Kirby also earned WPVA "Best Setter" honors in six of her 10 years on the tour. She won a Gold Medal in the Beach Volleyball Exhibition at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. Kirby played three seasons (1979-1981) at Utah State and was a two-time All-American (1980 and 1981). Kirby finished her collegiate playing career at the University of Kentucky in 1983. She was named an All-American for her efforts. She was named to the SEC All-Tournament Team and was deemed Most Valuable Player in 1983. Kirby is a 1979 graduate of Brookline (Mass.) High School, where she was a four-year varsity player as well as a two-year captain. She was the "Boston Globe High School Player of the Year" in 1979 when she led her team to a state championship.

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Kirby retired from professional beach volleyball in 1998, leaving the game as the all-time winningest player. She was also recently named a “Top Ten Player of the Century” by USA Volleyball. Currently, she is assistant coach of the University of New Hampshire women’s volleyball team.

Okamoto was the ace spiker, known as the “Power Hitting Cannon of the World,” for the Gold Medal-winning Japan Men’s Team at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Earlier, that team took the Silver at the Mexico City Olympic Games in 1968 and placed second to East Germany in the 1969 World Cup. He later coached the Japan team to a sixth-place finish at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. Okamoto, who lives in Osaka Prefecture, is Deputy General Manager of the Sports Fellowship Department of Suntory. He is a board member of the Japan Volleyball Association and devotes his time to the promotion of the sport.

Luis has to be considered one of the greatest volleyball players of all time. Her physical power and spectacular jumping ability helped her lead her National Team of Cuba to Olympic Gold in Barcelona (1992), Atlanta (1996), and Sydney (2000). Her list of medals and awards is staggering, including three MVP awards in World Cup action. Presently, She is vice president of the Cuban National Commission for Athletes and a member of the International Olympic Committee’s Solidarity Commission.

Musil was a key component of the great Czechoslovakian team of the 1950s and ‘60s that took Silver in the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo and Bronze at the Olympic Games in Mexico City in 1968. He currently lives in the Czech Republic, where recently he was bestowed the “Czech Fair Play” award in recognition for his life-long sporting achievements. He lives near Prague in the Sazava River Valley.

Other events planned for the weekend include a coaches clinic with top coaches from around the world and an officials clinic slated for Saturday, Oct. 16 at Holyoke Community College. The Induction Celebration continues with the **16-team Women’s Collegiate Volleyball Hall of Fame Induction Tournament** at **Smith, Mount Holyoke, Springfield and Amherst Colleges** on Friday night, Oct. 22 and Saturday Oct. 23. Admission is free.

For more information on how to obtain tickets or to sponsor Induction Celebration events, contact the Volleyball Hall of Fame at (413) 536-0926, by e-mail at info@volleyhall.org or by visiting the website at www.volleyhall.org.

The Induction Celebration is sponsored in part by Spalding, AAI, PeoplesBank, The Holyoke Holiday Inn and The Holyoke Medical Center.

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Photos for the media are available at:

<http://www.volleyhall.org/images/luis.jpg> • <http://www.volleyhall.org/images/okamoto.jpg>

<http://www.volleyhall.org/images/kirby.jpg> • <http://www.volleyhall.org/images/musil.jpg>