Museum to host Thorpe medals during Olympic Trials

EUGENE, Ore. – (June 5, 2012) – The Museum of Natural and Cultural History at the University of Oregon will open a display Wednesday, June 13, on track and field legend Jim Thorpe, featuring Thorpe's medals from the 1912 U.S. Olympic Trials.

At the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, Thorpe became the first and only athlete to win gold medals for both the pentathlon and decathlon. As a part of the celebrations honoring the 100th anniversary of this historic achievement, the display will explore Thorpe's athletic feats, his lifelong contributions to sports and his work to promote Native rights.

A Native American of Sac and Fox heritage, the Oklahoma-born Thorpe excelled in not only track and field, but also football and baseball at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. After the Olympics, he went on to play both professional baseball and football. In 1920, he helped organize the American Professional Football Association, which would become the National Football League, and served as its first president. Later, he traveled as a lecturer and advocate for Native rights.

Thorpe was stripped of his Olympic medals after it was revealed that he had been paid to play semi-professional baseball, violating the Olympics ban on participation by professional athletes. Thirty years after his death, the Amateur Athletic Union and the International Olympic Committee revised their decisions and restored his titles and medals.

The medals will be on display through July 8.

"Having the Thorpe medals here during the trials just makes sense," said Jon Erlandson, the museum's executive director. "From the museum’s collection of the world's oldest known shoes to the innovations in running shoes developed by Bill Bowerman, Phil Knight and Nike since the 1960s, the University of Oregon is the place to be for track and field enthusiasts around the world. And now with the addition of Jim Thorpe’s medals, we are thrilled to offer visitors a chance to glimpse the past while experiencing the present across the street at Hayward Field."

About the Museum of Natural and Cultural History
The Museum of Natural and Cultural History, 1680 E. 15th Ave. in Eugene, is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is $3 for adults, $2 for seniors and youths 17 and under, and $8 for families (two adults and up to four youths). Museum members are admitted free. Guided tours are offered each Friday at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

About the University of Oregon
The University of Oregon is a world-class teaching and research institution and Oregon’s flagship public university. The UO is one of just two Pacific Northwest universities with membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU), an organization made up of the 62 leading public and private research universities in the United States and Canada.

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Museum of Natural and Cultural History: http://natural-history.uoregon.edu
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