



The Project on the History of Black Writing presents

# **Black Literary Suite: Sports Figures with a Kansas Connection**

Thursday, February 18, 2016

2:00-5:00 p.m.

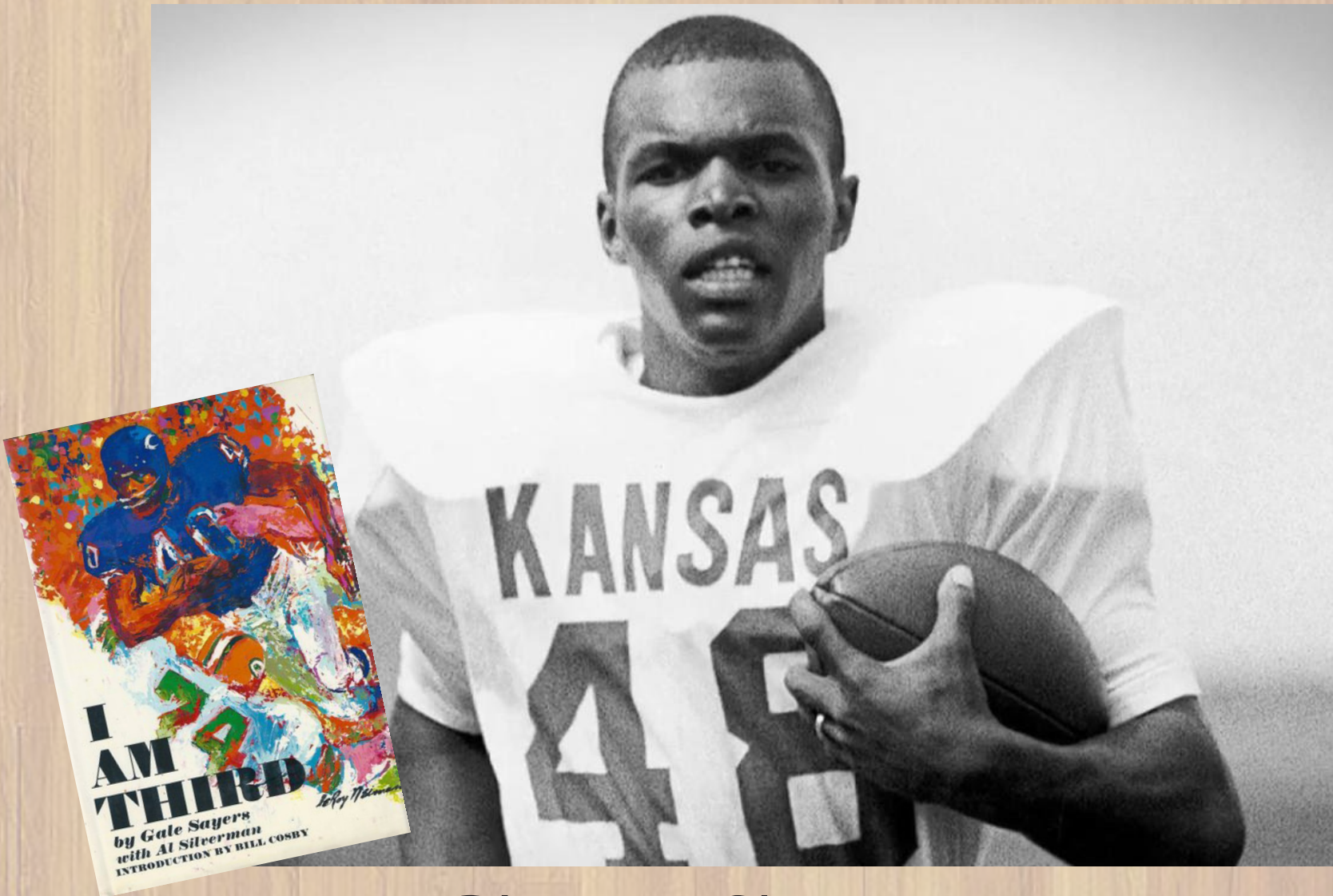
Watson Library, Floor 4

Refreshments provided

Sponsored by the Project on the History of Black Writing, KU Libraries, and KU Athletics



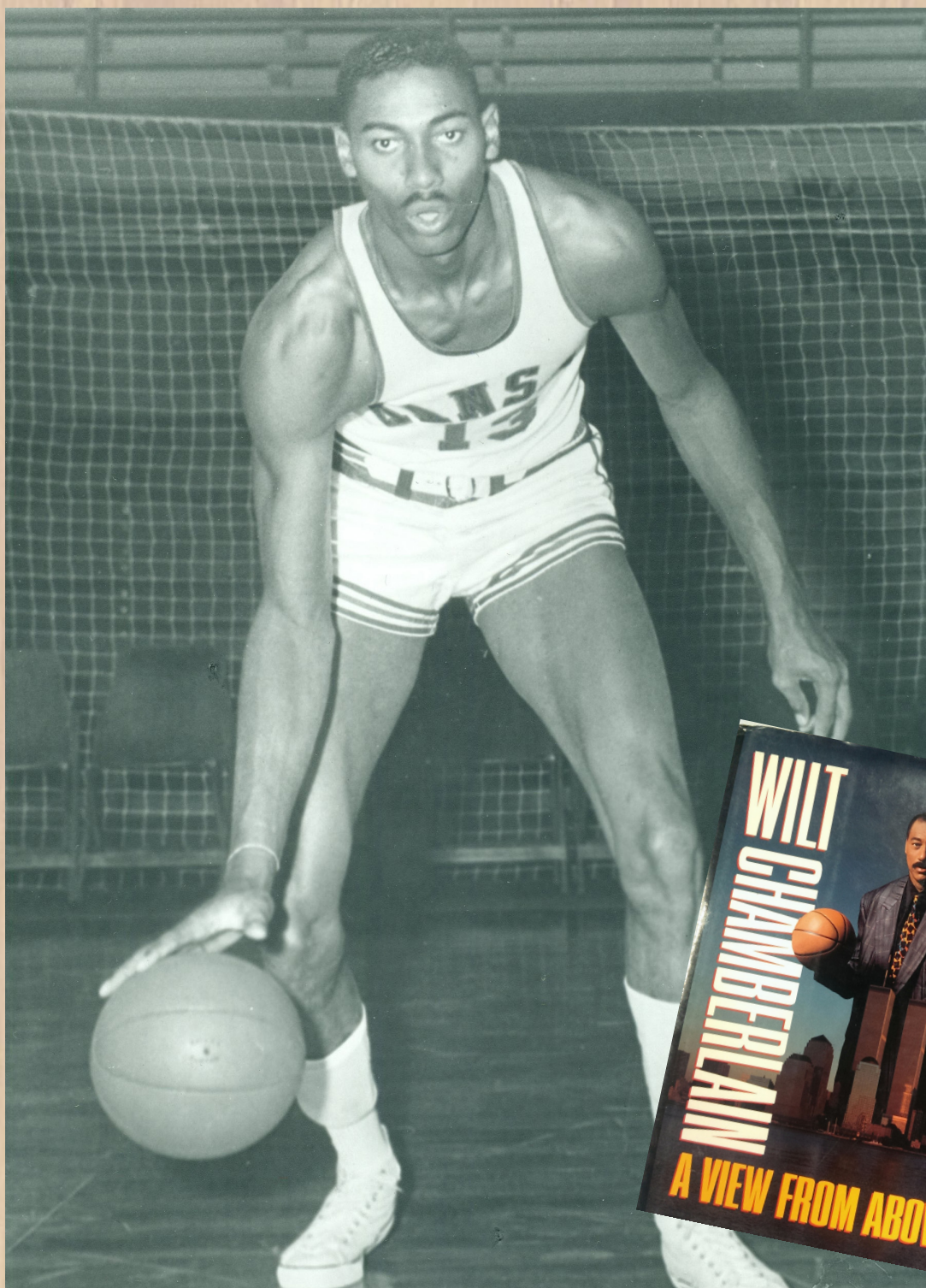
In order to view the exhibit, scan the QR code above or type the following URL into your mobile browser - <http://bit.do/suite2016>



# Gale Sayers (aka “The Kansas Comet”)

Gale Sayers was born on May 30, 1943, in Wichita, Kansas. He played for the University of Kansas, where he earned All-American honors twice for his abilities as a halfback and kick returner. Sayers played for KU from 1961-1965. After college, Sayers joined the NFL’s Chicago Bears. He returned to KU in 1973 to complete his undergraduate studies in Physical Education and work as the assistant athletic director. Sayers would remain at KU to earn a master’s degree in Educational Administration. In 1977 he was the youngest player to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

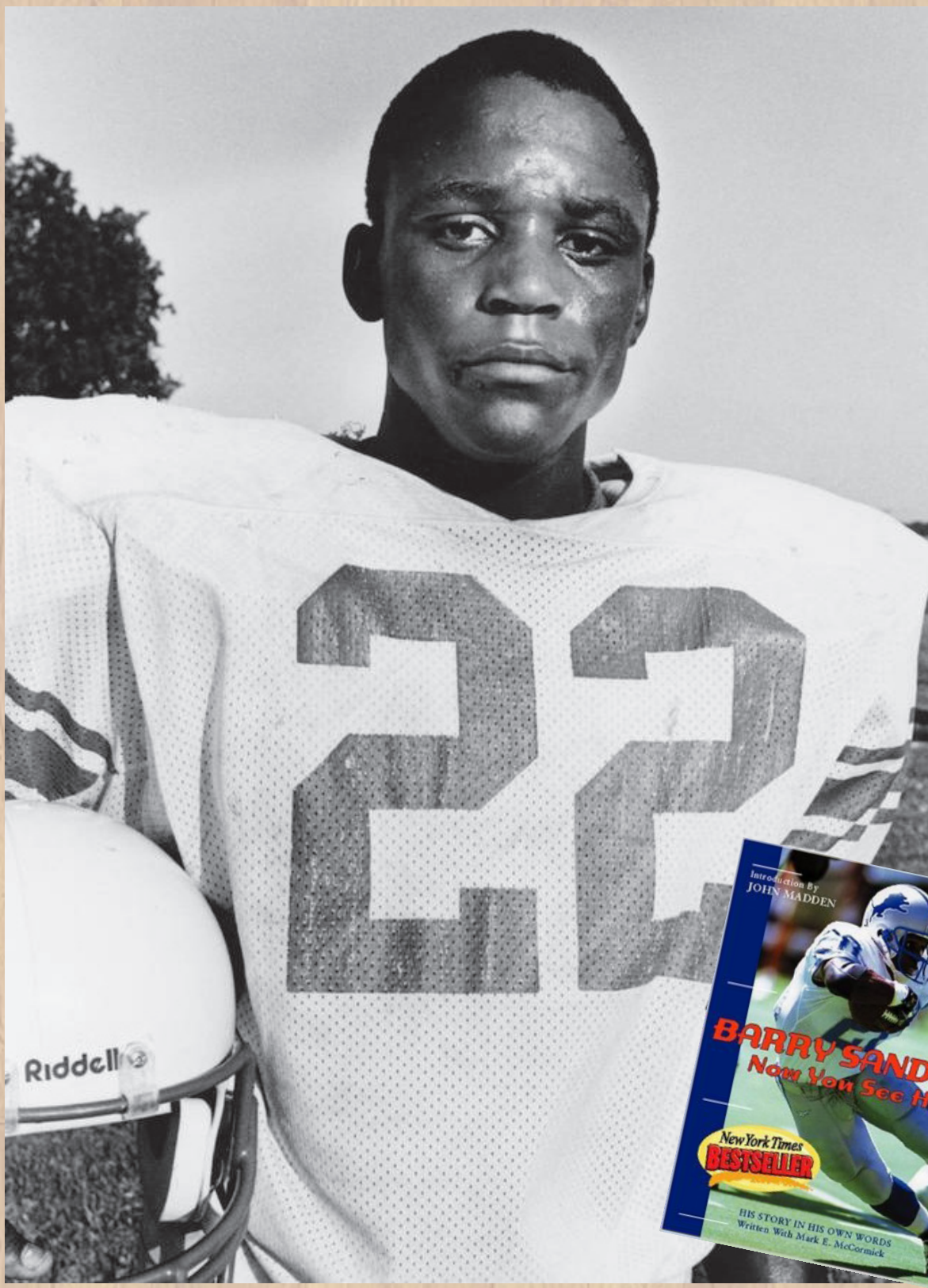
In *I Am Third: The Inspiration for Brian’s Song* (1971), Sayers recounts his struggle to rise out of poverty and transform himself into one of the best running backs in history. The autobiography also discusses his relationship with his Chicago Bears teammate and friend, Brian Piccolo. *I am Third* later served as inspiration for *Brian’s Song*, a film that portrays the men’s friendship and Piccolo’s battle with cancer. Sayers, along with Fred Mitchell, also wrote *Sayers: My Life and Times* (2007).



# Wilton “Wilt” Chamberlin (aka “Wilt the Stilt”)

Wilt Chamberlain was born on August 21, 1936, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and would go on to be one of the most famous basketball players in history. After coming to KU in 1955, he made his college basketball debut in 1956 with the Jayhawks and led the team to the NCAA finals in 1957. Though they lost to the North Carolina Tar Heels, the Jayhawks still awarded Chamberlain “Most Outstanding Player” for the tournament. Chamberlain left KU to turn pro after his junior year in 1958. He would go on to play for the Harlem Globetrotters before joining the Philadelphia Warriors. Chamberlain is still the only player to score 100 points in a single game. He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1978.

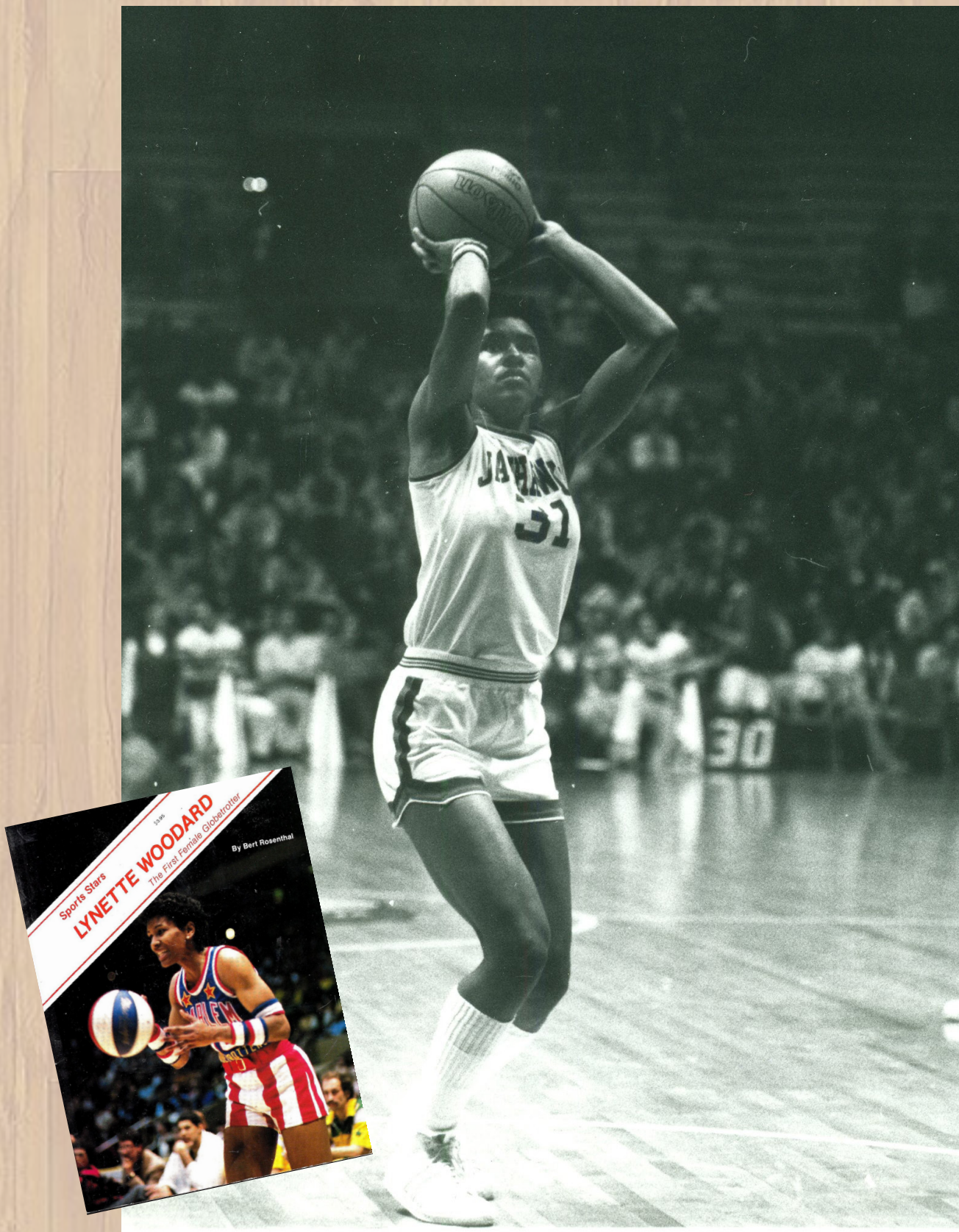
In his second book, *A View from Above* (1991), he discusses his personal life, as well as his opinions on topics such as politics, race, sex, and the public’s response to his height. Chamberlain’s first book is titled, *Wilt: Just like any other 7-foot Black Millionaire Who Lives Next Door* (1973), and most recently Chamberlain wrote the book, *Who’s Running the Asylum?: Inside the Insane World of Sports Today* (1997).



# Barry Sanders

Born on July 16, 1968, in Wichita, Kansas, Barry Sanders would go on to play 10 seasons in the NFL for the Detroit Lions. Sanders went to college at Oklahoma State from 1986-1989, foregoing his senior year to make his pro debut. He was a running back and held nearly every Lions rushing record and numerous all-time NFL records at the time of his retirement. One of the game's electrifying runners, he rushed more than 1,000 yards in each of his seasons with the Lions, and was the first running back to do so. Sanders was selected to play in the Pro Bowl in each of his 10 seasons. Among his other accomplishments, he won the 1988 Heisman Trophy and in 1997, was the third person to gain more than 2,000 yards in a season.

Sanders retired from football in 1999, at the height of his career — an abrupt move that shocked many fans. In his book, *Barry Sanders: Now You see Him... His Story in His Own Words* (2003), he attributes his frustration to the Lions' organization and its losing record as reasons for his departure.

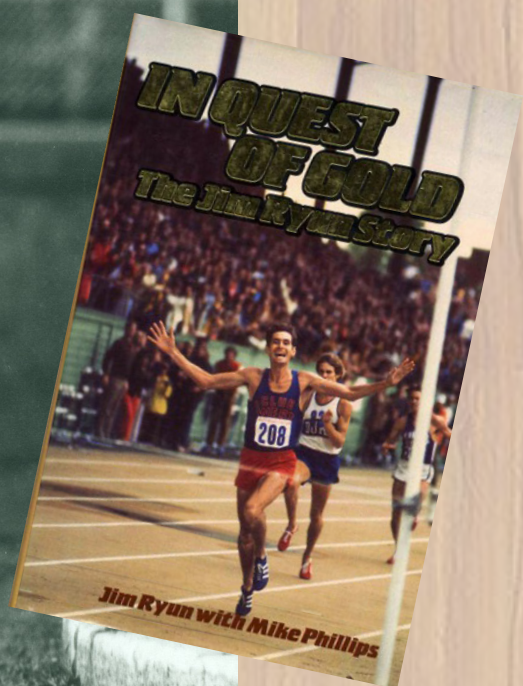
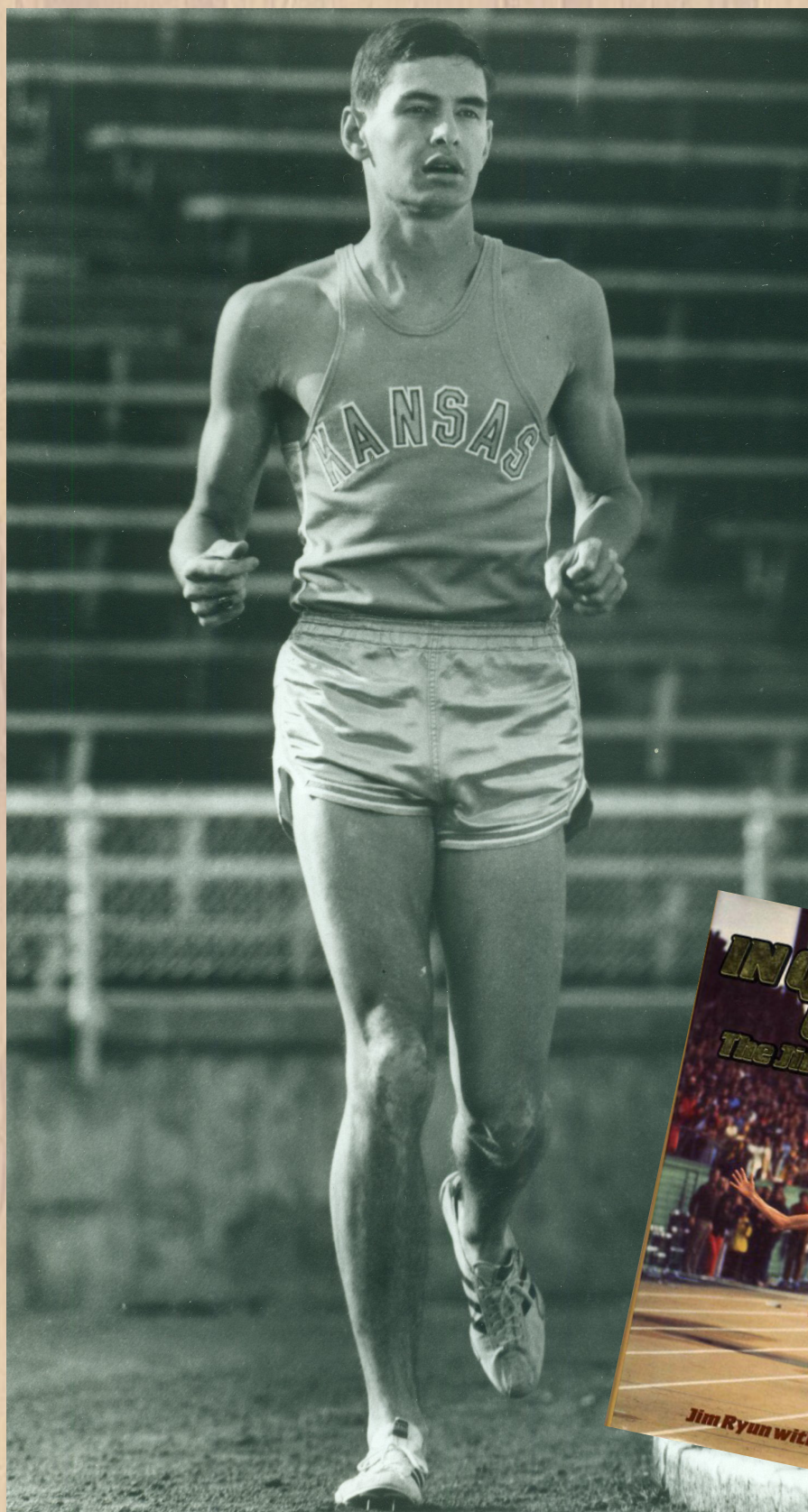


# Lynnette Woodard

Lynette Woodard was born on August 12, 1959, in Wichita, Kansas. In 1985, she became the first female Harlem Globetrotter. Before her historic achievement, Woodard led her high school basketball team to a State championship as a sophomore, and later played basketball for the University of Kansas (1978-1981). While at KU, she set a NCAA record for the most points a woman has ever scored in basketball history — 3,649. She graduated in 1981 with a degree in Speech Communications and Human Relations.

In 1984, Woodard led the women's basketball team to a gold medal in the Olympics. Afterwards, returned to KU for a job with the women's basketball team, and she later earned a spot as the first female Harlem Globetrotter. In 1997, she signed a contract to play in the new Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA).

A biography by Bert Rosenthal, *Lynette Woodard: The First Female Globetrotter* (1986), tracks her life and career.



# Jim Ryun

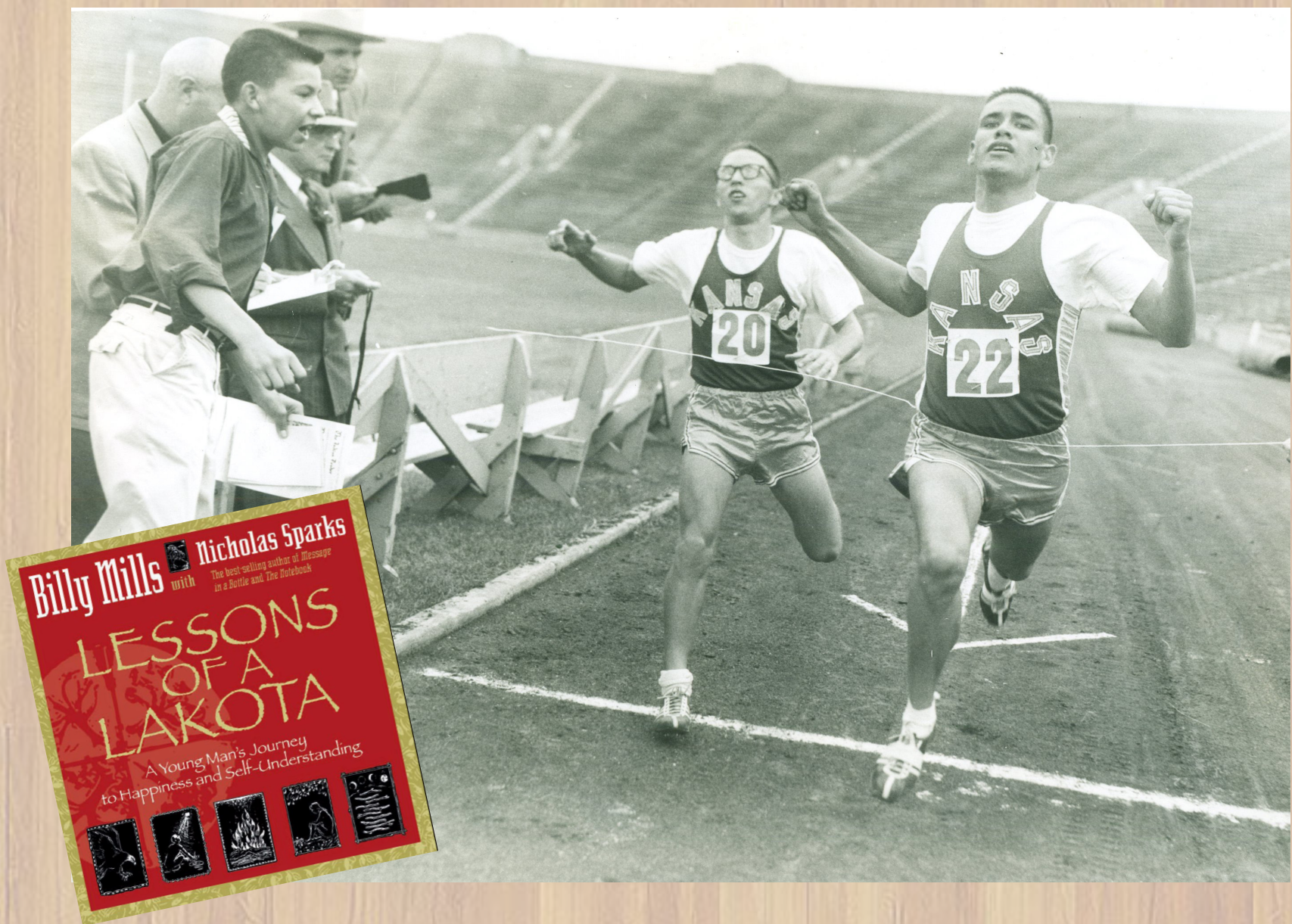
Jim Ryun was born on April 29, 1947, in Wichita, Kansas. In 1964, at the age of 17, he ran a 3:59.0 mile, making him the first high school athlete to break the four-minute. Ryun would ultimately lower his mile time to 3:55.3, a high school record that would stand for nearly 36 years.

After high school, Ryun originally planned to attend Oregon State, but wound up at the University of Kansas, where he would attend from 1965-1970. In 1966, Ryun set a new two-mile U.S. record with a time of 8:25.2. He was a three-time Olympian, earning the silver medal in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City.

In 1970, Jim Ryun earned a photojournalism degree from KU. In 1996, he ran for a seat in the House of Representatives. He won and was re-elected every two years until 2006.

Ryun is the author of three books: *Heroes Among Us: Deep within Each of Us* (2002), *The Courage to Run: Inspiration for Winning the Race of your Life* (2008), and *In Quest of Gold: The Jim Ryun Story* (1984).

Quote: “Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.” – Jim Ryun



# Billy Mills (Makata Taka Hela)

Billy Mills was born on June 30, 1938, in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. He broke several records in running at Haskell Institute (now Haskell Indian Nations University). In the late 1950s, he received an athletic scholarship from the University of Kansas and continued his running career at KU. Mills was a three-time NCAA All-American for cross-country. He graduated from KU in 1962 with a bachelor's degree in Education.

In the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Mills ran in the 10,000-meters. Going into the race, Mills was viewed as the “underdog” and was largely ignored by the media, whose attention rested on Australian Ron Clarke. Mills won the 10,000 meters, and remains the only American to do so. Dick Bank's cry, “Look at Mills! Look at Mills!” as Mills shot by everyone on the home stretch to take the gold, became famous in its own right. Mills also set a new Olympic record at a breathtaking time of 28:24.4.

Mills's book, *Wokini: A Lakota Journey to Happiness and Self-Understanding* (1990), is a tale that teaches us all to find happiness within.



From left to right: Floyd, Chancellor Murphy, Thurgood Marshall, Tidwell, and Shelby.

# Charlie Tidwell, Ernie Shelby, and Homer Floyd

Homer Floyd attended the university of Kansas from 1955-1958. Floyd was known for spending his career pushing for social equality. This resulted from the racial rejection that he and other black athletes experienced in Lawrence during the 1950's. Floyd shared the stage with the great Martin Luther King, Jr. at many human activism conferences. In 2013, Homer Floyd was honored by the KU Black Alumni Chapter's African-American Leaders and Innovators Project. In a meeting with the chancellor in 1957, Tidwell, Shelby, and Floyd expressed their intent to leave KU if situations did not improve.

Charlie Tidwell was as an All-American track star who ran track for the University of Kansas (1958-1960), and was one of the first black athletes at KU. Along with Wilt Chamberlain, Homer Floyd, and Ernie Shelby, Tidwell was instrumental in desegregating Lawrence and standing up to social injustice in their community. In 1959, Tidwell and Shelby led KU to victory in national outdoor track and field. His brother, Edgar Tidwell, currently teaches English courses at KU.

Ernie Shelby ran track and field for the University of Kansas (1957-1959) and formed friendships with other athletes, such as Charlie Tidwell. He transferred to KU in 1957, having qualified for the Olympic trials the year before, and by 1958 he was deemed "one of collegiate track and field's brightest stars."



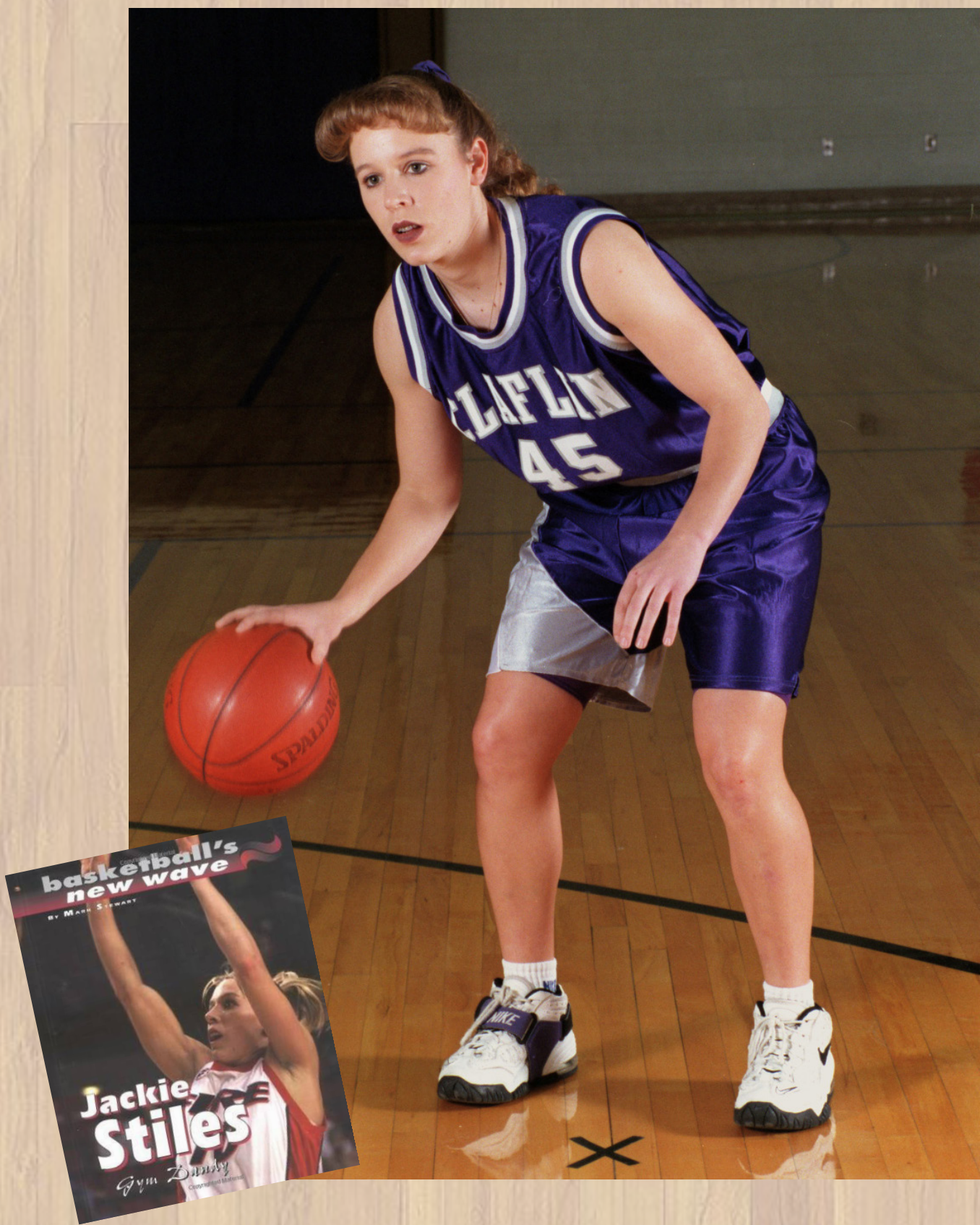
# Travis Watkins

Travis Watkins is the author of *My Fear is 4 U*, a book of poetry grappling with the younger generation's social commitment in the aftermath of the civil rights movement. Watkins holds a passion for poetry and spoken word: he is the winner of the National College Language Association award for Poetry and ranked in the top eight for the National Poetry Slam. Watkins won KU's monthly poetry contest for a year straight before "retiring" to become the host of the event. Watkins has been named "one of the top young poetic talents in the nation," transforming his personal stories into beautifully written poems. In addition to his poetic pursuits, Watkins was a four-year starter and team captain for the KU football team. He graduated with a degree in U.S. history and African American Studies in 2005.



# Marlene Mawson

Marlene Mawson, known as the “Mother of KU Women’s Athletics,” began her career at KU in 1968 as a physical education faculty member. She started a new women’s athletics program, and coached field hockey, basketball, and other sports. In addition to this responsibility, she was a full-time faculty member in the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. She served as secretary and eventually president of the Kansas Association for Women’s Athletics, the first Kansas collegiate sport association. She also served as KU’s institutional representative to the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women from 1971-1981. Mawson was a professor and administrator at KU for 22 years. In 1990, she was admitted to the KU Athletics Hall of Fame. An Emeritus Sports Administrator, Dr. Mawson has authored the book chapter “Sportswomanship” in *Sexual Sports Rhetoric* (2004), and several manuscripts including “Extreme Sport Challenges for Sport Managers” (2002). Dr. Mawson is currently working on a book tentatively titled *Mawson’s Mission* about the initiation of the KU women’s athletics program. An annual award is given out in Mawson’s name to exemplary student athletes.



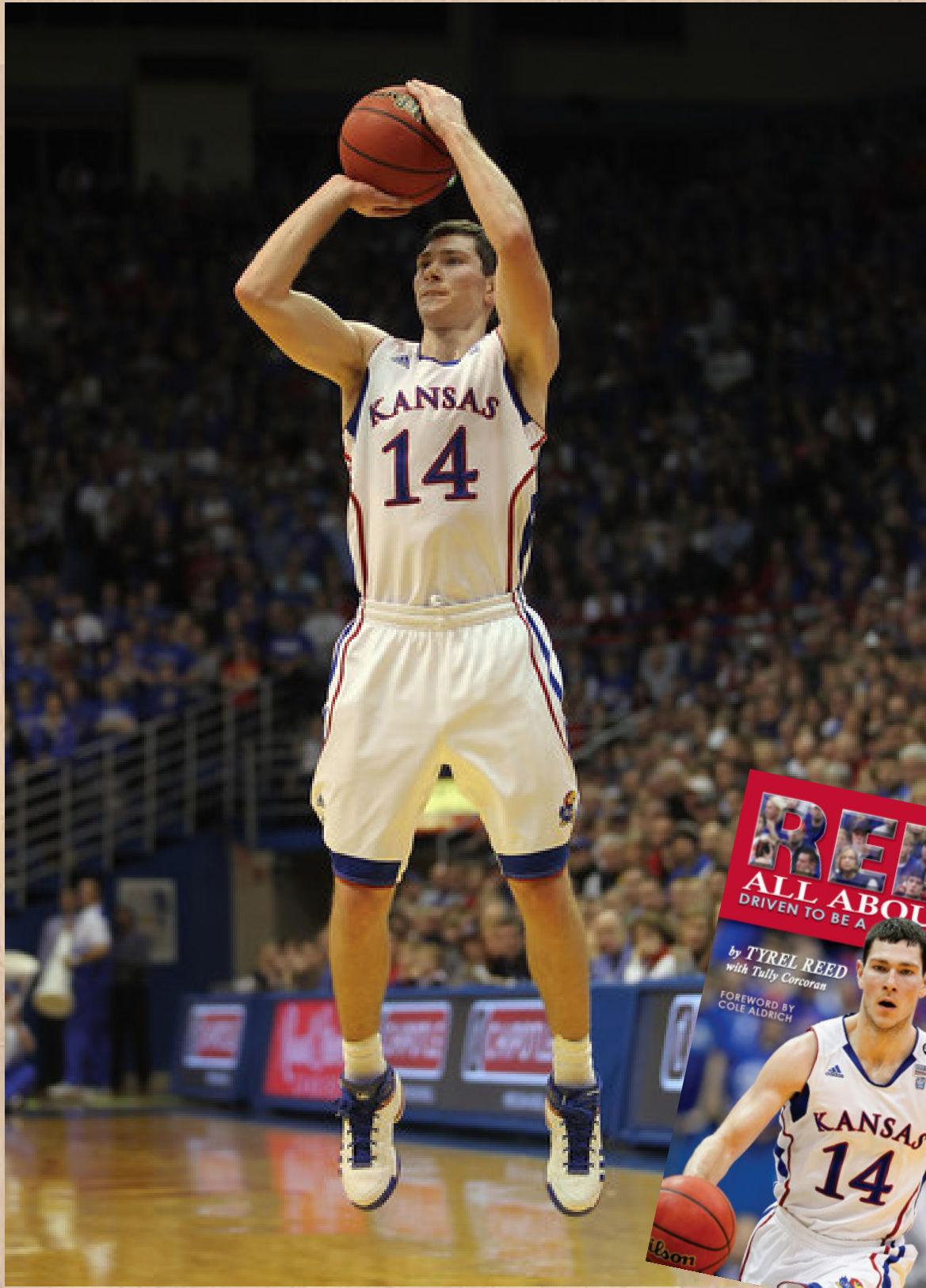
# Jackie Stiles

Jackie Stiles is a retired women's basketball player from Kansas City, Kansas. She played collegiate basketball for Missouri State University and still holds the title of all-time top scorer in Division I women's basketball. For a short period of time, Stiles went pro but resigned after several career-ending injuries. She is widely known and admired for her "larger than life dreams" in western Kansas, where she holds occasional basketball camps. *Jackie Stiles: Gym Dandy* (2002), is a biographical account that narrates Stiles' journey as one of the top collegiate basketball athletes.



# Marilynn Smith

Marilynn Smith is a former professional golfer and women's golf ambassador from Topeka, Kansas. She left KU in 1949 to turn pro. She is one of the founders of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), a prestigious and internationally known association established in 1950. In 1973, she became the first female to work on a men's golf television broadcast. In honor of Smith, the LPGA gives out twenty \$5,000 Marilynn Smith Scholarships each year to female high school graduates who plan to play golf on a collegiate level. Smith is also author of the book *Have Clubs, Will Travel* (2012), where she reflects on her life as both a golfer and an ambassador of women's golf.



# Tyrel Reed

Tyrel Reed is a former basketball player for the University of Kansas (2007-2011). He holds the record for most wins in a four-year season at KU at 132-17, making him the “winningest player in Jayhawk history.” Reed would remain in Kansas to attend KU Medical center in Kansas City, and in May 2015 Reed graduated with a degree in physical therapy before joining a Lawrence practice. His published novel, *Reed All About it: Driven to be a Jayhawk* (2011), captures his loyalty and love for the Jayhawks.