

Finally!

Melinda Hale Rhoads, one of Oil City High School's all-time great female athletes, is headed to the Slippery Rock University Hall of Fame.

Rhoads starred in basketball, swimming and track before graduating from OCHS in 1973.

She'll be inducted Sept. 9.

Here is her write-up from the SRU web site.

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HIGHLIGHTS: First four-year starter in SRU women's basketball history ... helped SRU to 52-20 record over four years in mid-1970s ... went on to highly successful career as a member of U.S. handball team that competed in two World Championships ... member of 1984 U.S. Olympic Team ... 1992 Pittsburgh Women's Hall of Fame inductee.

Melinda Rhoads was one of the first standout female student-athletes on the SRU campus in the early years after the passing of Title IX in 1972. She came to SRU in the fall of 1973 and would become the first four-year starter in women's basketball history before embarking on an even more successful career as a handball player with the U.S. National Team.

She joined head coach Anne Griffiths' basketball program as a freshman in 1973-74 and helped the squad to a 9-1 record just one year after the passing of Title IX. That squad would put together a 16-2 overall record in 1974-75 and would go on to post a record of 52-20 during the four years Rhoads was on the roster. The Rock picked up a consolation bracket win at the 1975 EAIAW Tournament and took down Penn State before losing to Maryland in the 1976 Mid-Atlantic Regional Championships. Rhoads also spent time on the Slippery Rock tennis, lacrosse, softball and track & field teams during her time on campus.

Before she graduated, she took the opportunity to try out for the U.S. Handball Team when a tryout was held at SRU in 1975. She earned a spot on the U.S. National Team as one of the first five original members and would eventually play nine years with the U.S. squad from 1975-84.

Rhoads would put together a decorated career as a handball athlete, helping the U.S. team to two World Championship appearances and landing her a place on the 1984 U.S. Olympic Team. She did not get the chance to compete in the 1980 Olympics because the United States boycotted the 1980 games, but Rhodes got the chance to compete in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984 when the U.S. finished fourth in handball.

She was named the Most Valuable Player on the U.S. Handball Team at three different national championship events and would help lead the team in a number of prestigious tournaments, including the West Point Tournament and multiple Olympic Sports Festivals. The highest honor

of her career came in 1980 when she was named the Player of the Year on the U.S. team. Following her time as a player, Rhoads gave back to the sport of handball by serving as a coach for the national team, coaching at numerous Olympic Festivals and serving as a committee chair and vice president of the United States Team Handball Federation.

Rhoads was honored in 1996 when the Summer Olympics returned to the United States when she was given the chance to be one of the Olympic Torch Bearers at the Atlanta Games.

She finished her degree at Slippery Rock in 1990 and spent her professional career as an educator and coach. Rhoads returned to the Slippery Rock area and worked as a paraprofessional and coach at Slippery Rock Middle School, where she coached junior high boys' and girls' basketball. She has spent more than 30 years coaching, "sharing a passion for sport with every kid that walked in the gym," in her own words.

Rhoads married former SRU men's basketball coach Robert "Posey" Rhoads, who passed away in 2013. The couple raised three daughters that were all exceptional athletes and are now successful adults. Jence Rhoads was a Division I All-American and one of the best basketball players in Vanderbilt University history that later made the U.S. National Handball team as well. Twin sisters Karly and Kourtney Rhoads were standout basketball players at Division II Kentucky Wesleyan, where they are tied for the program record in games played after playing in 115 career games each. Karly was a Division II All-American and Kourtney went on to join Jence as a member of the U.S. Handball Team.