

# Sports

## Olympic team among eligible Hall of Fame candidates

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the list of eligible candidates for the Class of 2024, including several high-profile, first-time nominees, including the 2008 U.S. Olympic Men's Basketball Team ("Redeem Team"), Vince Carter, Seimone Augustus, Bill Laimbeer, Rick Barnes, Mike Fratello and Penny Taylor.

A first look at the list of eligible nominees will be provided by "NBA Today" on ESPN, hosted by Malika Andrews, with Class of 2023 Hall of Famer Becky Hammon, Kendrick Perkins, Chiney Ogumike, and Brian Windhorst. A complete list of eligible candidates can be found below.

Finalists from the Honor's Committee for the Class of 2024 will be announced on Friday, February 16, in Indianapolis, Indiana, during NBA All-Star Weekend.

The entire Class of 2024 will be unveiled during the NCAA Final Four in Phoenix, Arizona, on Saturday, April 6, in a nationally televised broadcast.

The announcement time and broadcast network for both the Finalist and the Class Announcement will be announced in the near future.

Enshrinement weekend will begin at the Mohegan Sun on Friday, August 16, with the Tip-Off Celebration and Awards Gala, followed by the Enshrine-

ment ceremony on Saturday, August 17, at Springfield's historic Symphony Hall.

VIP Packages for the Hall of Fame Enshrinement Weekend will go on sale on Friday, February 16. All single-event tickets to the Ceremony, Tip Off Celebration, and Awards Gala, as well as other ancillary events, will go on sale on Saturday, April 6, at 12:00 p.m. EST. All packages and tickets will be available for purchase at [hoophall.com](http://hoophall.com).

The complete listing of events and pricing will be released by Feb. 1.

The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame also announced changes to its election process that will more carefully examine candidates from the International,

Men's Veteran's, Women's Veteran's, and Contributor Committees. Since 2011, the Hall of Fame has allowed these categories to be stand-alone 'direct-elect' committees with the objective of ensuring candidates who may have 'fallen through the cracks' received focused and specialized consideration in these various categories. The Election Process Committee has determined that this objective of more acute consideration has been met during this 12-year period, and now candidates put forth from these categories will revert back to the previous and traditional process of being presented for final consideration to the Honors Committee for election.

## T-birds coach gets call to NHL, named interim coach of Blues

*Daniel Tkaczuk will take over as interim head coach*

SPRINGFIELD – On Dec. 13, St. Louis Blues President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Doug Armstrong announced the team has relieved Craig Berube of his coaching duties and named Springfield Thunderbirds head coach Drew Bannister interim head coach. Bannister will travel to St. Louis on Wednesday and serve his first game behind the bench on Thursday when the Blues host the Ottawa Senators.

Bannister, 49, has spent the past three seasons with the Blues' AHL affiliate in Springfield, leading the team to a 93-58-19 regular-season record. The Belleville, Ontario, native has also guided the Thunderbirds to consecutive playoff appearances, including 2021-22, when they won the Eastern Conference and reached the Calder Cup Final.

Bannister began his coaching career in the Ontario Hockey League (OHL), where he spent three seasons as an assistant with Owen Sound and three as head coach with the Soo Greyhounds. He also served as head coach of the AHL's San Antonio Rampage and as an associate coach with the Utica Comets. As a player, Bannister's career spanned over 20 years and included 164 NHL regular-season games between the Tampa Bay Lightning, Edmonton Oilers, Anaheim Mighty Ducks, and New York Rangers.

In addition, Thunderbirds general manager Kevin Maxwell has announced

that Daniel Tkaczuk will take over the head coaching duties in Springfield on an interim basis.

Tkaczuk, 44, joined the St. Louis Blues organization in 2016 as an assistant coach with the club's AHL affiliate, the Chicago Wolves. After spending the 2017-18 season as a Skills Coach with the Blues, he rejoined the AHL affiliate as an assistant coach under Bannister in 2018, a role he has held ever since, including a promotion to Associate Head Coach in 2022.

The Toronto, Ontario native began his coaching career in the OHL as an assistant coach with the Owen Sound Attack from 2011-15 before spending the 2015-16 season with the Kitchener Rangers. Tkaczuk and Bannister were co-assistant coaches with Owen Sound from 2012-15.

Tkaczuk was the sixth overall draft pick in the 1997 NHL Draft by the Calgary Flames and played 12 professional seasons in both North America and Europe. As a member of the Saint John Flames, Tkaczuk captured a Calder Cup championship in 2000-01. He was tied for second among Flames skaters with 10 goals in the Calder Cup Playoffs that season.

In 286 AHL games with Saint John, the Worcester IceCats, Bridgeport Sound Tigers, Charlotte, Syracuse, Rochester, and Hartford, Tkaczuk posted 59 goals and 109 assists for 168 points. He was a career point-per-game performer in the playoffs, scoring 14 goals and adding 17 assists in 29 career Calder Cup playoff contests. Tkaczuk also skated in 19 NHL games with Calgary, putting up 11 points (four goals, seven assists) in the 2000-01 season.

## Granite State announces Pro Stock Series 2024 schedule

WALPOLE, N.H. – Granite State Pro Stock Series officials announced Friday the schedule of events for the 2024 racing season. The series slate includes a nine-race championship battle spread from May to October, with the championship event taking place at Lee USA Speedway's Octoberfest weekend.

The Granite State Pro Stock Series will visit five different tracks in 2024: Lee, Star Speedway, Claremont Motorsports Park, Riverside Speedway and Speedway 95. The schedule begins with the annual 100-lap spring event at Star Speedway in Epping, New Hampshire, this year on Saturday, May 4 with a Friday night practice on May 3. From there, teams will roll to Claremont Motorsports Park for the Memorial Day weekend, with a main event set for Sunday, May 26.

On Saturday, June 8, the series will make the first of two visits to Lee USA Speedway. That will be followed by the first of two races at Hermon, Maine's Speedway 95 on Saturday, June 16. After a few weeks off, the schedule continues with a return to Claremont for Independence Day weekend on Friday, July 5 with a special event.

The high-banks of Hudson International Speedway will host the series again on Sunday, July 14, while Riverside Speedway returns to the schedule with an event on Saturday, August 10. The final two events of the year will take place at Speedway 95 on Sunday, September 15 and Lee's Octoberfest weekend, where the champion will be decided, on Saturday and Sunday, October 5-6.

"Our 2024 schedule is shaping up to be

one of the best in our history," Mike Parks, President of the Granite State Pro Stock Series, said. "Return trips to places like Star, Speedway 95, Lee USA and Riverside, mixed with us getting back on the high-banks of Hudson, will produce an exciting championship battle for fans to follow during the summer of 2024."

Additional information regarding the 2024 Granite State Pro Stock Series schedule including event registrations, rules and more will be available soon. For the latest news, fans and teams are encouraged to visit [gsps.net](http://gsps.net) and follow the series on social media.

- 2024 Granite State Pro Stock Series Schedule**
- Saturday, May 4  
Star Speedway - Epping, N.H.
  - Sunday, May 26  
Claremont Motorsports Park - Claremont, N.H.
  - Saturday, June 8  
Lee USA Speedway - Lee, N.H.
  - Sunday, June 16  
Speedway 95 - Hermon, Maine
  - Friday, July 5  
Claremont Motorsports Park - Claremont, N.H.
  - Sunday, July 14  
Hudson International Speedway - Hudson, N.H.
  - Saturday, August 10  
Riverside Speedway - Groveton, N.H.
  - Sunday, September 15  
Speedway 95 - Hermon, Maine
  - Saturday/Sunday October 5-6  
Lee USA Speedway, Lee, N.H.

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**2000 Toyota 4Runner**  
VIN: JT3HN86R8Y0289699  
Gary Croteau  
14 Meadow Ave  
Agawam, MA 01001  
12/14, 12/21, 12/28/2023

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