



For Immediate Release

January 28, 2019

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**Celebrate Washington Sports at the 84th Annual MTRWestern Sports Star of the Year
Honorees Announced**

SEATTLE – Celebrating the inspirational and influential members of our community, the Seattle Sports Commission (SSC) announces the honorees for the 84th Annual MTRWestern Sports Star of the Year: **Royal Brougham Award – Sue Bird**, Seattle Storm point guard and basketball icon; **Paul G. Allen Award – Sandy Gregory**, former senior director of legends, team history and special projects for the Seattle Seahawks; **Wayne Gittinger Award – Elijah Hagstrom**, young athlete who made a glorious return to sports after conquering cancer; **Keith Jackson Award – Art Thiel**, co-founder of SportsPress Northwest and long-time Seattle sports columnist. The recipients will be honored on the Grand Ballroom stage at the Sheraton Grand Seattle on February 7, 2019.

“Since the establishment of these Honors, we have been able to acknowledge some of the pillars of our Seattle region,” Chuck Nelson, SSC Executive Committee Chair explains, “These are people who have dedicated their lives to their craft, and who’s passion for improving themselves and their surroundings directly impact our community.” Honorees are selected by the Sports Star Committee, comprised of local sports historians, media and other members of the sports industry. Recognizing the tremendous accomplishments of the honorees and nominees is an essential component of showcasing the triumphs of Washington sports over the years.

84th Annual MTRWestern Sports Star of the Year Honorees

Royal Brougham Award - *Given to an individual for a lifetime of achievement in sports and who exemplifies the spirit of our state.*

Sue Bird – Even in the midst of a celebrated WNBA career, Sue Bird has proven herself to be among the best women players of all time. The Seattle Storm’s savvy point guard has won two NCAA titles, four World Cup gold medals, and four Olympic gold medals, in addition to playing a key role in all three of the Storm’s championship seasons. – “Sue is a true Seattle sports champion. Her impact off the court has been equally as significant as her accomplishments on the court. Sue began giving back to the Seattle community long before the awards and accolades started to mound. She embodies the very best of professional sports and we are fortunate she dons the yellow and green jersey.” - Alisha Valavanis, CEO and General Manager of the Seattle Storm.

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Paul G. Allen Award - *Given to an individual who has made a significant or compelling philanthropic contribution.*

Sandy Gregory - The last of the original Seahawks employees, Sandy Gregory joined the franchise as a public relations assistant in 1976. She retired in June 2018 as senior director of legends, team history and special projects. She was the heart and soul of the team's community outreach, earning praise from past and present players whose charity events she helped stage. – "Sandy was instrumental in my career. Oftentimes, people forget about those behind-the-scenes components. I know for sure that my life was easier because of how easy she was to work with. Sandy is not just staff, she is family, and I am extremely honored to be able to witness her get the recognition she deserves." – Walter Jones, Pro Football Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Wayne Gittinger Inspirational Youth Award - *Given to an inspirational young athlete who has overcome major medical obstacles to inspire others.*

Elijah Hagstrom - When he was 6, Elijah Hagstrom was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer in his liver and lungs. He spent nearly a year hospitalized, undergoing 10 rounds of chemotherapy and having most of his liver removed. He has done more than survive the ordeal. Now 9, he and his team recently completed their football season – fittingly, as champs. – "This event is more than just honoring my son, Elijah. It's about creating a special memory I'll forever cherish. Because I live with the thought that Elijah's cancer could come back, every captured memory is extremely precious to me. This means more than words can express." – Ed Hagstrom, Elijah's father.

Keith Jackson Award - *Given to a member of the media for excellence in communicating the sports stories of our state.*

Art Thiel - For four decades Art Thiel has been one of Puget Sound's most insightful and funniest sports columnists. He worked at the News Tribune in Tacoma, the Journal-American in Bellevue and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer before co-founding the website SportsPress Northwest. He also is the author of four books on Seattle sports. – "It has been my absolute pleasure to talk sports with Art Thiel every week for the past 12 years on KNKX (formerly KPLU). Art is smart, witty and has the unique ability to explain a complex sports issue in a way that even non-sports fans understand and appreciate. Above all, Art is a master of the written word. No one can tell a story better than Art Thiel." – Kirsten Kendrick, KNKX Morning Edition Host

84th Annual MTRWestern Sports Star of the Year

Tickets are available for the February 7 MTRWestern Sports Star of the Year, and can be purchased online at sportsstaroftheyear.org. For more details about the event, the awards nominees, and honorees, visit the event website, or stay up-to-date with information as the event approaches by following the SSC on social media, and the event hashtag, #84SSY.

Seattle Sports Commission

The Seattle Sports Commission (SSC), a division of Visit Seattle, is committed to making Seattle a world-class sports community. Sports have the opportunity to bring the world to Seattle and bring our region together. A strong sports culture can strengthen local businesses, local kids and local pride.
www.seattlesports.org