

= Jim Thorpe =

James Francis " Jim " Thorpe ( Sac and Fox ( Sauk ) : Wa @-@ Tho @-@ Huk , translated as " Bright Path " ; May 22 , 1887 ? March 28 , 1953 ) was a Sac and Fox athlete of Native American and European ancestry . Considered one of the most versatile athletes of modern sports , he won Olympic gold medals in the 1912 pentathlon and decathlon , played American football ( collegiate and professional ) , and also played professional baseball and basketball . He lost his Olympic titles after it was found he was paid for playing two seasons of semi @-@ professional baseball before competing in the Olympics , thus violating the amateurism rules that were then in place . In 1983 , 30 years after his death , the International Olympic Committee ( IOC ) restored his Olympic medals .

Thorpe grew up in the Sac and Fox Nation in Oklahoma . He played as part of several all American Indian teams throughout his career , and " barnstormed " as a professional basketball player with a team composed entirely of American Indians .

From 1920 to 1921 , Thorpe was nominally the first president of the American Professional Football Association ( APFA ) , which would become the National Football League ( NFL ) in 1922 .

He played professional sports until age 41 , the end of his sports career coinciding with the start of the Great Depression . Thorpe struggled to earn a living after that , working several odd jobs . Thorpe suffered from alcoholism , and lived his last years in failing health and poverty .

In a poll of sports fans conducted by ABC Sports , Thorpe was voted the Greatest Athlete of the Twentieth Century out of 15 other athletes including Muhammad Ali , Babe Ruth , Jesse Owens , Wayne Gretzky , Jack Nicklaus , and Michael Jordan .

= = Early life = =

Information about Thorpe 's birth , name and ethnic background varies widely . He was baptized " Jacobus Franciscus Thorpe " in the Catholic Church . Thorpe was born in Indian Territory , but no birth certificate has been found . He was generally considered to have been born on May 22 , 1887 , near the town of Prague , Oklahoma . Thorpe himself said in an article in The Shawnee News @-@ Star in 1949 that he was born May 28 , 1888 , on his mother 's allotment " near and south of Bellemont ? Pottawatomie County ? along the banks of the North Fork River ... hope this will clear up the inquiries as to my birthplace . " However , most biographers believe that he was born on May 22 , 1887 , as that is what is listed on his baptismal certificate . Bellemont was a small community , now disappeared , on the line between Pottawatomie and Lincoln Counties . While the town of Prague , Lincoln County , now claims to be the birthplace of Thorpe , there is no evidence that Thorpe himself called Prague his hometown . All his personal references were either Shawnee ( the county seat of Pottawatomie County and about ten miles ( 16 km ) southwest of his birthplace ) or " Pott County " . The Sac and Fox agency is in Stroud , Lincoln County , which could cause some of the confusion .

Thorpe 's parents were both of mixed @-@ race ancestry . His father , Hiram Thorpe , had an Irish father and a Sac and Fox Indian mother . His mother , Charlotte Vieux , had a French father and a Potawatomi mother , a descendant of Chief Louis Vieux . He was raised as a Sac and Fox , and his native name , Wa @-@ Tho @-@ Huk , translated as " path lit by great flash of lightning " or , more simply , " Bright Path " . As was the custom for Sac and Fox , he was named for something occurring around the time of his birth , in this case the light brightening the path to the cabin where he was born . Thorpe 's parents were both Roman Catholic , a faith which Thorpe observed throughout his adult life .

Thorpe attended the Sac and Fox Indian Agency school in Stroud , Oklahoma , with his twin brother , Charlie . Charlie helped him through school until he succumbed to a bout of pneumonia when they were nine years old . He ran away from school several times . His father then sent him to the Haskell Institute , an Indian boarding school in Lawrence , Kansas , so that he would not run away again . When his mother died of childbirth complications two years later , he became depressed . After several arguments with his father , he left home to work on a horse ranch .

In 1904 the sixteen @-@ year @-@ old Thorpe returned to his father and decided to attend Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle , Pennsylvania . There his athletic ability was recognized and he was coached by Glenn Scobey " Pop " Warner , one of the most influential coaches of early American football history . Later that year he became orphaned after Hiram Thorpe died from gangrene poisoning after being wounded in a hunting accident , and Jim again dropped out of school . He resumed farm work for a few years and then returned to Carlisle Indian Industrial School .

= = Amateur career = =

= = = College career = = =

Thorpe began his athletic career at Carlisle in 1907 when he walked past the track and beat all the school 's high jumpers with an impromptu 5 @-@ ft 9 @-@ in jump still in street clothes . His earliest recorded track and field results come from 1907 . He also competed in football , baseball , lacrosse and even ballroom dancing , winning the 1912 intercollegiate ballroom dancing championship .

Pop Warner was hesitant to allow Thorpe , his best track and field athlete , to compete in a physical game such as football . Thorpe , however , convinced Warner to let him try some rushing plays in practice against the school team 's defense ; Warner assumed he would be tackled easily and give up the idea . Thorpe " ran around past and through them not once , but twice " . He then walked over to Warner and said " Nobody is going to tackle Jim " , while flipping him the ball .

Thorpe gained nationwide attention for the first time in 1911 . As a running back , defensive back , placekicker and punter , Thorpe scored all his team 's points ? four field goals and a touchdown ? in an 18 ? 15 upset of Harvard , a top ranked team in those early days of the National Collegiate Athletic Association . His team finished the season 11 ? 1 . In 1912 Carlisle won the national collegiate championship largely as a result of his efforts ? he scored 25 touchdowns and 198 points during the season .

Carlisle 's 1912 record included a 27 ? 6 victory over Army . In that game , Thorpe 's 92 @-@ yard touchdown was nullified by a teammate 's penalty , but on the next play Thorpe rushed for a 97 @-@ yard touchdown . Future President Dwight Eisenhower , who played against him that season , recalled of Thorpe in a 1961 speech :

" Here and there , there are some people who are supremely endowed . My memory goes back to Jim Thorpe . He never practiced in his life , and he could do anything better than any other football player I ever saw . "

He was awarded All @-@ American honors in both 1911 and 1912 .

Football was ? and would remain ? Thorpe 's favorite sport . He competed only sporadically in track and field , even though this turned out to be the sport in which he gained his greatest fame .

In the spring of 1912 , he started training for the Olympics . He had confined his efforts to jumps , hurdles and shot @-@ puts , but now added pole vaulting , javelin , discus , hammer and 56 lb weight . In the Olympic trials held at Celtic Park in New York , his all @-@ round ability stood out in all these events and so he riveted a claim to a place on the team that went to Sweden .

= = = Olympic career = = =

For the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm , Sweden , two new multi @-@ event disciplines were included , the pentathlon and the decathlon . A pentathlon , based on the ancient Greek event , had been introduced at the 1906 Summer Olympics . The 1912 version consisted of the long jump , javelin throw , 200 @-@ meter dash , discus throw and 1500 @-@ meter run .

The decathlon was a relatively new event in modern athletics , although it had been part of American track meets since the 1880s and a version had been featured on the program of the 1904 St. Louis Olympics . The events of the new decathlon differed slightly from the American version . Both seemed appropriate for Thorpe , who was so versatile that he served as Carlisle 's one @-@

man team in several track meets . According to his obituary in The New York Times he could run the 100 @-@ yard dash in 10 seconds flat , the 220 in 21 @.@ 8 seconds , the 440 in 51 @.@ 8 seconds , the 880 in 1 : 57 , the mile in 4 : 35 , the 120 @-@ yard high hurdles in 15 seconds , and the 220 @-@ yard low hurdles in 24 seconds . He could long jump 23 ft 6 in and high @-@ jump 6 ft 5 in . He could pole vault 11 feet , put the shot 47 ft 9 in , throw the javelin 163 feet , and throw the discus 136 feet .

Thorpe entered the U.S. Olympic trials for both the pentathlon and the decathlon . He won the awards easily , winning three events , and was named to the pentathlon team , which also included future International Olympic Committee president Avery Brundage . There were only a few candidates for the decathlon team , however , and the trials were cancelled .

His schedule in the Olympics was busy . Along with the decathlon and pentathlon , he competed in the long jump and high jump . The first competition was the pentathlon . He won four of the five events and placed third in the javelin , an event he had not competed in before 1912 . Although the pentathlon was primarily decided on place points , points were also earned for the marks achieved in the individual events . He won the gold medal . That same day , he qualified for the high jump final in which he placed fourth , and also took seventh place in the long jump . Even more remarkably , because someone had stolen his shoes just before he was due to compete , he found some discarded ones in a rubbish bin and won his medals wearing them . He is shown in the 1912 photo wearing two different shoes and extra socks because one shoe was too big .

Thorpe 's final event was the decathlon , his first ? and as it turned out , his only ? Olympic decathlon . Strong competition from local favorite Hugo Wieslander was expected . Thorpe , however , easily defeated Wieslander by more than 700 points . He placed in the top four in all ten events , and his Olympic record of 8 @,@ 413 points would stand for nearly two decades . Overall , Thorpe won eight of the 15 individual events comprising the pentathlon and decathlon .

As was the custom of the day , the medals were presented to the athletes during the closing ceremonies of the games . Along with the two gold medals , Thorpe also received two challenge prizes , which were donated by King Gustav V of Sweden for the decathlon and Czar Nicholas II of Russia for the pentathlon . Several sources recount that , when awarding Thorpe his prize , King Gustav said , " You , sir , are the greatest athlete in the world " , to which Thorpe replied , " Thanks , King " . Contemporary sources from 1912 are lacking , suggesting that the story was apocryphal , however . The anecdote appeared in newspapers as early as 1948 , 36 years after his appearance in the Olympics , and in books as early as 1952 .

Thorpe 's successes had not gone unnoticed at home , and he was honored with a ticker @-@ tape parade on Broadway . He remembered later , " I heard people yelling my name , and I couldn 't realize how one fellow could have so many friends . "

Apart from his track and field appearances , he also played in one of two exhibition baseball games at the 1912 Olympics , which featured two teams composed of U.S. track and field athletes . It was not Thorpe 's first try at baseball , as the public would soon learn .

= = = All @-@ Around Champion = = =

After his victories at the Olympic Games in Sweden , on September 2 , 1912 , he returned to Celtic Park , the home of the Irish American Athletic Club , in Queens , New York ( where he had qualified four months earlier for the Olympic Games ) , to compete in the Amateur Athletic Union 's All @-@ Around Championship . Competing against Bruno Brodd of the Irish American Athletic Club and J. Bredemus of Princeton University , he won seven of the ten events contested and came in second in the remaining three . With a total point score of 7 @,@ 476 points , Thorpe broke the previous record of 7 @,@ 385 points set in 1909 , ( also set at Celtic Park ) , by Martin Sheridan , the champion athlete of the Irish American Athletic Club . Sheridan , a five @-@ time Olympic gold medalist , was present to watch his record broken , approached Thorpe after the event and shook his hand saying , " Jim , my boy , you 're a great man . I never expect to look upon a finer athlete . " He told a reporter from New York World , " Thorpe is the greatest athlete that ever lived . He has me beaten fifty ways . Even when I was in my prime , I could not do what he did today . "

## == Controversy ==

In 1912 , strict rules regarding amateurism were in effect for athletes participating in the Olympics . Athletes who received money prizes for competitions , were sports teachers or had competed previously against professionals were not considered amateurs and were barred from competition .

In late January 1913 , the Worcester Telegram published a story announcing that Thorpe had played professional baseball , and other U.S. newspapers followed up the story . Thorpe had indeed played professional baseball in the Eastern Carolina League for Rocky Mount , North Carolina , in 1909 and 1910 , receiving meager pay ; reportedly as little as US \$ 2 ( \$ 51 today ) per game and as much as US \$ 35 ( \$ 889 today ) per week . College players , in fact , regularly spent summers playing professionally but most used aliases , unlike Thorpe .

Although the public didn 't seem to care much about Thorpe 's past , the Amateur Athletic Union ( AAU ) , and especially its secretary James Edward Sullivan , took the case very seriously . Thorpe wrote a letter to Sullivan , in which he admitted playing professional baseball :

I hope I will be partly excused by the fact that I was simply an Indian schoolboy and did not know all about such things . In fact , I did not know that I was doing wrong , because I was doing what I knew several other college men had done , except that they did not use their own names ...

His letter didn 't help . The AAU decided to withdraw Thorpe 's amateur status retroactively and asked the International Olympic Commission ( IOC ) to do the same . Later that year , the IOC unanimously decided to strip Thorpe of his Olympic titles , medals and awards and declare him a professional .

Although Thorpe had played for money , the AAU and IOC did not follow the rules for disqualification . The rulebook for the 1912 Olympics stated that protests had to be made " within " 30 days from the closing ceremonies of the games . The first newspaper reports did not appear until January 1913 , about six months after the Stockholm Games had concluded . There is also some evidence that Thorpe 's amateur status had been questioned long before the Olympics , but the AAU had ignored the issue until being confronted with it in 1913 .

The only positive element of this affair for Thorpe was that , as soon as the news was reported that he had been declared a professional , he received offers from professional sports clubs .

## == Professional career ==

### == Baseball free agent ==

Because the minor league team that last held Jim Thorpe 's contract had disbanded in 1910 , he found himself in the rare position of being a sought after free agent at the major league level during the era of the reserve clause , and thus had a choice of baseball teams for which to play . In January 1913 , he turned down a starting position with the American League cellar @-@ dwelling St. Louis Browns , choosing instead to join the 1912 National League champion New York Giants , who , with Thorpe playing in 19 of their 151 games , would repeat as the 1913 National League champions . Immediately following the Giants ' October loss in the 1913 World Series , Thorpe and the Giants joined the Chicago White Sox for a world tour . Barnstorming across the United States and then around the world , Thorpe was the celebrity of the tour . Thorpe 's presence increased the publicity , attendance and gate receipts for the tour . He met with Pope Pius X and Abbas II Hilmi Bey ( the last Khedive of Egypt ) , and played before 20 @, @ 000 people in London including King George V. While in Rome , he was filmed wrestling with another baseball player on the floor of the Colosseum , although no known copy of that film has survived .

### == Baseball , football , and basketball ==

Thorpe signed with the New York Giants baseball club in 1913 and played sporadically with them

as an outfielder for three seasons . After playing in the minor leagues with the Milwaukee Brewers in 1916 , he returned to the Giants in 1917 but was sold to the Cincinnati Reds early in the season . In the " double no @-@ hitter " between Fred Toney of the Reds and Hippo Vaughn of the Chicago Cubs , Thorpe drove in the winning run in the 10th inning . Late in the season , he was sold back to the Giants . Again , he played sporadically for them in 1918 before being traded to the Boston Braves on May 21 , 1919 , for Pat Ragan . In his career , he amassed 91 runs scored , 82 runs batted in and a .252 batting average over 289 games . He continued to play minor league baseball until 1922 .

But Thorpe had not abandoned football either . He first played professional football in 1913 as a member of the Indiana @-@ based Pine Village Pros , a team that had a several @-@ season winning streak against local teams during the 1910s . He then signed with the Canton Bulldogs in 1915 . They paid him \$ 250 ( \$ 5 @,@ 848 today ) a game , a tremendous wage at the time . Before signing him Canton was averaging 1 @,@ 200 fans a game , but 8 @,@ 000 showed up for his debut against the Massillon Tigers . The team won titles in 1916 , 1917 , and 1919 . He reportedly ended the 1919 championship game by kicking a wind @-@ assisted 95 @-@ yard punt from his team 's own 5 @-@ yard line , effectively putting the game out of reach . In 1920 , the Bulldogs were one of 14 teams to form the American Professional Football Association ( APFA ) , which would become the National Football League ( NFL ) two years later . Thorpe was nominally the APFA 's first president , but spent most of the year playing for Canton and a year later was replaced as president by Joseph Carr . He continued to play for Canton , coaching the team as well . Between 1921 and 1923 , he helped organize and played for the Oorang Indians ( LaRue , Ohio ) , an all @-@ Native American team . Although the team 's record was 3 ? 6 in 1922 , and 1 ? 10 in 1923 , he played well and was selected for the Green Bay Press @-@ Gazette 's first All @-@ NFL team in 1923 , which would later be formally recognized by the NFL as the league 's official All @-@ NFL team in 1931 ) .

Thorpe never played for an NFL championship team . He retired from professional football at age 41 , having played 52 NFL games for six teams from 1920 to 1928 .

Until 2005 , most of Thorpe 's biographers were unaware of his basketball career until a ticket discovered in an old book that year documented his career in basketball . By 1926 , he was the main feature of the " World Famous Indians " of LaRue which sponsored traveling football , baseball and basketball teams . " Jim Thorpe and His World @-@ Famous Indians " barnstormed for at least two years ( 1927 ? 28 ) in parts of New York and Pennsylvania as well as Marion , Ohio . Although pictures of Thorpe in his WFI basketball uniform were printed on postcards and published in newspapers , this period of his life was not well documented .

= = Marriage and family = =

Thorpe married three times and had eight children ( one of whom died in childhood ) . In 1913 Thorpe married Iva M. Miller , whom he had met at Carlisle . In 1917 Iva and Thorpe bought a house now known as the Jim Thorpe House in Yale , Oklahoma , and lived there until 1923 . They had four children : Gail Margaret ( October 31 , 1917 ? June 3 , 2005 ) , James F. ( May 8 , 1918 ? September 28 , 1919 ) , Charlotte Marie ( September 16 , 1919 ? December 8 , 1998 ) and Grace Frances ( December 10 , 1921 ? April 1 , 2008 ) . Miller filed for divorce from Thorpe in 1925 , claiming desertion .

In 1926 Thorpe married Freeda Verona Kirkpatrick ( September 19 , 1905 ? March 2 , 2007 ) . She was working for the manager of the baseball team for which he was playing at the time . They had four sons : Carl Phillip ( May 1 , 1927 ? March 18 , 1986 ) , a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army , William K. , Richard A. and John R. " Jack " ( June 29 , 1937 ? February 22 , 2011 ) . Kirkpatrick divorced Thorpe in 1941 after 15 years of marriage .

Lastly , Thorpe married Patricia Gladys Evelyn " Patsy " Askew ( née Woodbury ) on June 2 , 1945 ; she was with him when he died .

= = Later life = =

After his athletic career , Thorpe struggled to provide for his family . He found it difficult to work a non @-@ sports @-@ related job and never held a job for an extended period of time . During the Great Depression in particular , he had various jobs , among others as an extra for several movies , usually playing an American Indian chief in Westerns . He also worked as a construction worker , a doorman ( bouncer ) , a security guard and a ditch digger , and briefly joined the United States Merchant Marine in 1945 . Thorpe was a chronic alcoholic during his later life .

He ran out of money sometime in the early 1950s . When hospitalized for lip cancer in 1950 , he was admitted as a charity case . At a press conference announcing the procedure , his wife , Patricia , wept and pleaded for help , saying , " We 're broke ... Jim has nothing but his name and his memories . He has spent money on his own people and has given it away . He has often been exploited . "

= = Death = =

In early 1953 , Thorpe went into heart failure for the third time while dining with Patricia in their home in Lomita , California . He was briefly revived by artificial respiration and spoke to those around him , but lost consciousness shortly afterward and died on March 28 at the age of 65 .

= = Racism = =

Thorpe , whose parents were both half Caucasian , was raised as an American Indian . His accomplishments occurred during a period of severe racial inequality in the United States . It has often been suggested that his medals were stripped because of his ethnicity . While it is difficult to prove this , the public comment at the time largely reflected this view . At the time Thorpe won his gold medals , not all Native Americans were recognized as U.S. citizens . ( The U.S. government had wanted them to make concessions to adopt European @-@ American ways to receive such recognition . ) Citizenship was not granted to all American Indians until 1924 .

While Thorpe attended Carlisle , students ' ethnicity was used for marketing purposes . The football team was called the Indians . A photograph of Thorpe and the 1911 football team emphasized racial differences among the competing athletes ; the inscription on the most important game ball of that season reads , " 1911 , Indians 18 , Harvard 15 . " Additionally , the school and journalists often categorized sporting competitions as conflicts of Indians against whites ; newspaper headings such as " Indians Scalp Army 27 ? 6 " or " Jim Thorpe on Rampage " made stereotypical journalistic play of the Indian background of Carlisle 's football team . The first notice of Thorpe in the The New York Times was headlined " Indian Thorpe in Olympiad ; Redskin from Carlisle Will Strive for Place on American Team . " His accomplishments were described in a similar racial context by other newspapers and sportswriters throughout his life .

= = Legacy = =

= = = Olympic awards reinstated = = =

Over the years , supporters of Thorpe attempted to have his Olympic titles reinstated . US Olympic officials , including former teammate and later president of the IOC Avery Brundage , rebuffed several attempts , with Brundage once saying , " Ignorance is no excuse . " Most persistent were the author Robert Wheeler and his wife , Florence Ridlon . They succeeded in having the AAU and United States Olympic Committee overturn its decision and restore Thorpe 's amateur status before 1913 .

In 1982 , Wheeler and Ridlon established the Jim Thorpe Foundation and gained support from the U.S. Congress . Armed with this support and evidence from 1912 proving that Thorpe 's disqualification had occurred after the 30 @-@ day time period allowed by Olympics rules , they

succeeded in making the case to the IOC . In October 1982 , the IOC Executive Committee approved Thorpe 's reinstatement . In an unusual ruling , they declared that Thorpe was co @-@ champion with Ferdinand Bie and Wieslander , although both of these athletes had always said they considered Thorpe to be the only champion . In a ceremony on January 18 , 1983 , the IOC presented two of Thorpe 's children , Gale and Bill , with commemorative medals . Thorpe 's original medals had been held in museums , but they had been stolen and have never been recovered .

= = = Honors = = =

Thorpe 's monument , featuring the quote from Gustav V ( " You , sir , are the greatest athlete in the world . " ) , still stands near the town named for him , Jim Thorpe , Pennsylvania . The grave rests on mounds of soil from Thorpe 's native Oklahoma and from the stadium in which he won his Olympic medals .

Thorpe 's achievements received great acclaim from sports journalists , both during his lifetime and since his death . In 1950 an Associated Press poll of almost 400 sportswriters and broadcasters voted Thorpe the " greatest athlete " of the first half of the 20th century . That same year , the Associated Press named Thorpe the " greatest American football player " of the first half of the century . In 1999 , the Associated Press placed him third on its list of the top athletes of the century , following Babe Ruth and Michael Jordan . ESPN ranked Thorpe seventh on their list of best North American athletes of the century .

Thorpe was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1963 , one of seventeen players in the charter class . Thorpe is memorialized in the Pro Football Hall of Fame rotunda with a larger @-@ than @-@ life statue . He was also inducted into halls of fame for college football , American Olympic teams , and the national track and field competition .

President Richard Nixon , as authorized by U.S. Senate Joint Resolution 73 , proclaimed Monday , April 16 , 1973 , as " Jim Thorpe Day " to promote the nationwide recognition of Thorpe . In 1986 , the Jim Thorpe Association established an award with Thorpe 's name . The Jim Thorpe Award is given annually to the best defensive back in college football . The annual Thorpe Cup athletics meeting is named in his honor . The United States Postal Service issued a 32 ¢ stamp on 3 February 1998 as part of the Celebrate the Century stamp sheet series .

In 2015 proposed designs for the 2018 Native American dollar coin featuring Thorpe were released .

= = = Jim Thorpe , Pennsylvania = = =

After Thorpe 's funeral was held at St. Benedict 's Catholic Church in Shawnee , Oklahoma , his body was lying in state at Fairview Cemetery after citizens had paid to have it moved to Shawnee by train from California . The people were in a fund raising effort to erect a permanent monument and burial place for Thorpe at the town 's Athletic Park . Local officials had asked the state legislature for funding but were turned down so they doubled their efforts to raise the money on their own . Meanwhile , Thorpe 's third wife , unbeknownst to the rest of his family , " stole " Thorpe 's body and had it shipped to Pennsylvania when she heard that the small Pennsylvania towns of Mauch Chunk and East Mauch Chunk were seeking to attract business . She made a deal with officials which , according to Thorpe 's son Jack , was done by Patricia for monetary considerations . The towns bought Thorpe 's remains , erected a monument to him , merged , and renamed the newly united town in his honor Jim Thorpe , Pennsylvania even though Thorpe had never been there . The monument site contains his tomb , two statues of him in athletic poses , and historical markers describing his life story .

The town of Shawnee , disappointed that they were unable to honor the man who considered Shawnee his hometown , named their football field in his honor .

In June 2010 , Jack Thorpe filed a federal lawsuit against the borough of Jim Thorpe , seeking to have his father 's remains returned to his homeland and re @-@ interred near other family members in Oklahoma . Citing the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act , Jack was

arguing to bring his father 's remains to the reservation in Oklahoma , where they would be buried near those of his father , sisters and brother , a mile from the place he was born . He claimed that the agreement between his stepmother and Jim Thorpe , Pa . , borough officials was made against the wishes of other family members who want him buried in Native American land . Jack Thorpe died at 73 on February 22 , 2011 .

In April 2013 , U.S. District Judge Richard Caputo ruled that Jim Thorpe borough in northeastern Pennsylvania amounts to a museum under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act ( " NAGPRA " ) . A lawyer for Bill and Richard Thorpe said the men would pursue the legal process to have their father returned to Sac and Fox land in central Oklahoma .

On October 23 , 2014 , the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit reversed Judge Caputo 's ruling . The appeals court held that Jim Thorpe borough is not a " museum " , as that term is used in NAGPRA , and that the plaintiffs therefore could not invoke that federal statute to seek reinterment of Thorpe 's remains . It directed the trial court to enter a judgment in favor of the borough . The appeals court noted that although the plaintiffs were free to ask a Pennsylvania state court to order reinternment of Thorpe 's remains under state law , there is " great reluctance " under Pennsylvania state law to order reinternment .

On October 5 , 2015 , the United States Supreme Court refused to hear the matter , effectively bringing the legal process to an end .

= = In film = =

In the 1930s , Thorpe appeared in several short films and features . Usually , his roles were cameo appearances as an Indian , although in the 1932 comedy , Always Kickin , Thorpe was prominently cast in a speaking part as himself , a kicking coach teaching young football players to drop @-@ kick . In 1931 , during the Great Depression , he sold the film rights to his life story to MGM for \$ 1 @, @ 500 ( \$ 23 @, @ 000 today ) . The movie included archival footage of the 1912 and 1932 Olympics , as well as a banquet in which Thorpe was honored . Thorpe was seen in some long shots in the film ; and one scene showed him as a coaching assistant . It was also distributed in the United Kingdom , where it was called Man of Bronze .

Thorpe had a cameo appearance in the 1940 film Knute Rockne , All American . Late in the film , he tells Pat O 'Brien ( playing Knute Rockne ) at the halftime of a game , " Two minutes , Rock ! " He is referenced by O 'Brien earlier in the film , as a player you could build a team around . He played a member of the Navajo band in the 1950 film Wagon Master .

Thorpe was memorialized in the Warner Bros. film Jim Thorpe ? All @-@ American ( 1951 ) starring Burt Lancaster , with Billy Gray performing as Thorpe as a child . The film was directed by Michael Curtiz . Although there were rumors that Thorpe received no money , he was paid \$ 15 @, @ 000 by Warner Bros. plus a \$ 2 @, @ 500 donation toward an annuity for him by the studio head of publicity .

He is mentioned twice in Disney 's 1973 film The World 's Greatest Athlete .

Thorpe is featured as a ghost figure in the 1994 film WindRunner : A Spirited Journey , where he is portrayed by Russell Means .