

Region

B Saturday
February 15, 2003
TimesDaily
www.timesdaily.com

Managing Editor: Robyn Tomlin - 740-5721



MATT McKEAN/TimesDaily

Muscle Shoals Wal-Mart Supercenter's assistant manager, Anthony Ball, stocks shelves with boxes of Wheaties cereal featuring Lawrence County native and Olympic gold medal winner Jesse Owens.

Breakfast of champions

Wheaties honors Jesse Owens

By Tom Smith
REGIONAL BUREAU

As local residents visit their favorite grocery store during the next few weeks, they may see a familiar face on boxes of Wheaties.

As part of Black History Month, General Mills is honoring Lawrence County native Jesse Owens with a special-edition Wheaties box.

The box contains a photo of Owens on the cover and a biography of him on the back.

"I was in Decatur and saw the box, and I grabbed a couple up," said James Pinion, a member of the Owens Park and Museum Board of directors. "I thought they would be a great addition to the museum.

"This is a great honor for someone local to be on a box of Wheaties."

Owens was born Sept. 12, 1913, in the Oakville community, which is just south of Moulton.

The Owens Park and Museum is near the site of his birthplace.

Owens moved with his family to Cleveland when he was 9 years old. He attended The Ohio State Uni-

versity, where he was recognized for his outstanding efforts in track.

In 1936, as a member of the U.S. Olympic team, Owens gained national and international fame. During the Summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany, Owens won four gold medals.

In a news release, General Mills said Owens overcame segregation, racism and bigotry to take his place as one of the greatest track and field athletes in American history.

The package, which was unveiled at the Ohio Stadium on the campus of The Ohio State University on Jan. 30, will be available for purchase throughout February.

Owens' daughter, Marlene Rankin, unveiled the package at Ohio State.

"I'm sure he would be pleased with this; it's a great honor," Rankin said from her Chicago home. "Our entire family is very pleased that this has happened. It's an honor for our family."



The back of the cereal box has a biography of Owens, whose accomplishments are memorialized at Owens Park and Museum in Oakville.

Rankin said she learned last year about the honor for her father.

"People from Wheaties called us to tell us about the box and what was going to happen. It was very exciting to know that he had been chosen for the box cover," she said.

"My father overcame a lot in his life. I know he would be very honored to take his place among the many great athletes who have appeared on the Wheaties box over the years."

Owens died in 1980 at age 66.

In 1976, he was awarded the highest honor a United States civilian can receive when President Gerald Ford awarded him the Medal of Freedom.

"Jesse Owens truly exemplifies
FAME continued on 2B



Pinion

FAME: Wheaties honors Owens

Continued from 1B

what it means to be a Wheaties Champion," said Wheaties Marketing Manager Brian Kittelson in a release.

"He clearly conquered many barriers to achieve greatness.

"Jesse Owens is a great addition to the Wheaties family."

Other notable black athletes to be honored during Black History Month by General Mills include Jackie Robinson, Arthur Ashe, Muhammad Ali, Walter Payton and Hank Aaron. Aaron, a native of Alabama, was honored in 2002.

Pinion said it's only fitting that Owens is honored by having his photo on the cereal box.

"Wheaties is called the 'Breakfast of Champions' and Jesse Owens has been called the 'Champion of Champions,'" Pinion said. "This is a very fitting honor for



Broad jump medalists salute during the medals ceremony Aug. 11 1936, at the Summer Olympics in Berlin. Gold medalist Jesse Owens gives a traditional salute as Germans give the Nazi salute.

someone of his stature."
Tom Smith can be reached at

332-0140 or tom.smith@timesdaily.com.