

President awards Owens with honor

by Mary R. Hale
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President Bush will be presenting Ruth Owens, widow of past Ohio State and Olympic athlete hero Jesse Owens, with Congress' highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, this morning at the White House.

Owens is being awarded the medal posthumously for recognition of his athletic achievements as well as his work for civil rights and humanity.

In addition to becoming the first athlete to receive four gold medals in an Olympics, Owens devoted much of his life speaking on the virtue of fair play and advocated the power of sports to bridge differences between races, classes, and cultures.

"Jesse Owens' contributions to American sports, society, and history are invaluable," said Rep. Louis Stokes, (D-Ohio), creator of the legislation authorizing the medal for Owens. "It is only fitting that the congress and the president should honor this American with his fifth and final gold medal."

The ceremony will be attended by President Edward H. Jennings, Stokes, and several of Owens' teammates from his years on the OSU track team, including former

Ohio congressman Samuel Devine.

Joyce Larkin, spokeswoman for Stokes, said in order to award the medal, legislation must be introduced and accepted by two-thirds of Congress. She said Stokes introduced the bill in 1986.

The bill was passed in September 1988 by the Senate, and Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, (D-Ohio), served as the author.

"The reason for the delay since the time the legislation was passed is because the Bureau of Mint, which produces the medal, confers with the family of the recipient for the design of the medal," Larkin said.

The medal is given as a tribute for what are considered to be distinguished achievements. Larkin said.

The medal contains a facial picture of Owens on the front, and a picture of Owens competing in one of his Olympic events on the back, she said.

The first medal was given to George Washington in March of 1776 when he served as commander of the Continental Army. About 108 medals have been awarded since that time. Larkin said.

Owens joins baseball Hall of Famer Roberto Clemente and heavyweight champion Joe Louis as sports legends to whom the medal has been awarded.



Four-time Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens