

WHEATIES

A Rather Humble Beginning

The popular cereal flake in the orange box was born when a Minneapolis health clinician accidentally spilled some wheat bran mixture on a hot stove, creating tasty wheat flakes. The idea for whole-grain cereal flakes was brought to the attention of the head miller at the Washburn Crosby Company (General Mills' predecessor), George Cormack, who perfected the process for producing the flakes. In November 1924, the ready-to-eat cereal known as Washburn's Gold Medal Whole Wheat Flakes during its development was ready for the market. The cumbersome name was shortened to "Wheaties" as the result of an employee contest won by Jane Bausman, the wife of a company executive. Wheaties' first venture into the world of sports was the sponsorship of minor league baseball broadcasts. The brand's sports

association began with a sign on the left field wall at old Nicollet Park in south Minneapolis in 1933. General Mills' broadcast deal with the minor league Minneapolis Millers on radio station WCCO included the large signboard that Wheaties would use to introduce its new advertising slogan. The late Knox Reeves (of the Minneapolis-based advertising agency that bore his name) was asked what should be printed on the signboard for his client. He took out a pad and pencil, it is said, sketched a Wheaties package, thought for a minute, and then printed "Wheaties - The Breakfast of Champions." From that modest beginning, Wheaties' storied sports heritage has gone on to embrace many of the greatest athletes of all time.

Baseball and “The Breakfast of Champions”

Wheaties baseball broadcasts continued to be immensely popular throughout the 1930s. From one station they expanded to 95, spreading to teams and cities throughout the country. Athlete testimonials were a key part of the “Breakfast of Champions” broadcast package. Among the baseball stars endorsing the cereal through the years were: Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Lefty Grove, Carl Hubbell, Joe Cronin, Jimmie Foxx, Mel Ott, Eddie Stanky, Bob Feller, Ted Williams, Hank Greenberg, Stan Musial, Lou Boudreau, Phil Rizzuto, Jackie Robinson, Hal Newhouser, Roy Campanella, Pee Wee Reese, Warren Spahn, Yogi Berra, Mickey Mantle and Johnny Bench. In fact, Wheaties had such a strong presence that 46 of the 51 players selected for the 1939 Major League All-Star Game endorsed Wheaties at the time.

Two months after that 1939 All-Star Game, Wheaties sponsored the first televised commercial sports broadcast when, on August 29, NBC presented a game between the Cincinnati Reds and the Brooklyn Dodgers for some 500 owners of television sets in New York City. The late Red Barber handled the play-by-play for the inaugural baseball broadcast.

Wheaties broadcasts also led to the film career of Ronald “Dutch” Reagan, a sportscaster from Des Moines, Iowa, who made play-by-play re-creations of Chicago Cubs games using telegraph reports. In 1937, Reagan was voted the most popular Wheaties announcer in the country and was awarded a trip to the Cubs’ spring training camp in California. While there, he took a Warner Brothers screen test and subsequently became a popular film star. He later went into politics and became the 40th president of the United States.

Carl Hubbell: 1938
Baseball



Testimonials from Athletes of All Sports

Wheaties' popularity boomed during the 1930s, and the cereal became synonymous with all parts of the sports world. Testimonials by great athletes such as Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey and Johnny Weismuller made Americans as aware of a product as they had ever been. So close was the tie between the cereal and sports that former heavyweight champion Max Baer and baseball great Lou Gehrig both inadvertently announced that they were Wheaties eaters on radio programs sponsored by competing cereals. Other Wheaties endorsers included Red Grange, Bronko Nagurski, Otto Graham, Babe Didrikson, Patty Berg, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, and George Mikan.

Testimonials came not only from well-known athletes, but also from baseball managers, trainers, broadcasters, football coaches, circus stars, champion livestock breeders, a champion railroad engineer, a horseman, a big-game hunter, auto racing drivers, an airline pilot, a jockey, a female speedboat driver, an explorer, a rodeo rider, and even parachute jumpers.

An unsolicited testimonial came in 1950 when a 22-year-old man from Trenton, N.J., hoisted a 2,700-pound elephant and its trainer on his back while 3,000 people watched. According to *The Modern Millwheel*, a General Mills employee publication, he was not paid for his statement that "I guess there's only one thing I eat every day-Wheaties."

Bob Feller: 1938
Baseball



A Departure from Sports

The advent of television and the increasing costs of radio play-by-play sponsorships (Wheaties was gradually forced to share these sponsorships with other non-competing products) were omens of things to come for the brand's future. In the late 1940s, unable to continue sponsoring play-by-play sports telecasts because of tremendous programming costs, Wheaties turned to athlete testimonials in commercials as a less expensive substitute. But the testimonial, which had been so effective on radio, lost a great deal of its appeal on television. With Wheaties' sales holding their own in the 1950s, General Mills officials were generally uneasy about the product's future.

Finally, on the basis of consumer research and marketing statistics, the company made a crucial decision: abandon sports and go after the children's cereal market—a heavy per capita consumption group. In place of athletes, Wheaties began associating itself with the Lone Ranger and the Mickey Mouse Club. More youngsters began eating Wheaties, but not enough to offset the decline in adult consumption. Sales dropped more than 10 percent in one year.

Hank Greenberg: 1947
Baseball



The Return to Sports and Physical Fitness

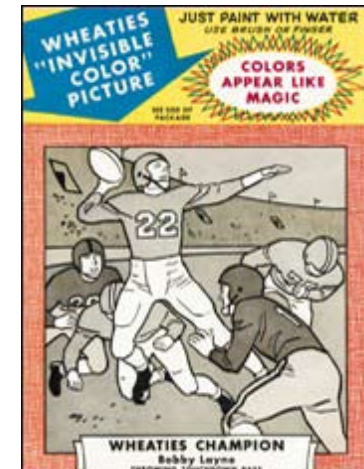
During the mid-1950s, despite Wheaties' new association with the children's cereal market, many still thought of the cereal as the "Breakfast of Champions." So, by 1958, Wheaties returned to its roots-sports.

Three major strategies were implemented. First, a spokesperson was sought to present the Wheaties story and promote sports and physical fitness. From more than 500 candidates, the nod went to two-time pole vault champion Bob Richards, a well-known crusader for fitness. Second, Wheaties went back into sports television, pioneering in several areas, including sponsorship of pre- and post-game shows. Third, the Wheaties Sports Federation was established. This organization, with Richards as director, worked closely with such groups as the U.S. Olympic Committee, the

U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the President's Council on Youth Fitness to promote sports and athletic participation throughout the country. The federation produced a large number of instructional and educational films, which were made available free to the public. It engaged in direct financial support of such activities as Olympic educational programs and the Jaycee Junior Champ track and field competition.

Over the years, Wheaties' philosophy has been to promote physical fitness rather than simply appealing to sports fans. Sports such as swimming, skiing, tennis and golf have been prominent on packages. Wheaties believed, in fact, believes, that good health comes from proper nutrition and physical fitness.

Bobby Layne: 1956
Football



The Best of The Best: The Six Wheaties Spokespeople

Over the years, Wheaties has recognized the outstanding athletic achievements of several hundred amateur and professional athletes on “The Breakfast of Champions®” package. Of all these championship athletes, only six have been chosen as official Wheaties spokespersons for the cereal. These six athletes are more than just champions in their sport; they also are inspirational role models and champions in their community through their charitable endeavors.

Whether it is their never-ending leadership in charitable causes or the time and effort they put into helping America’s youth, these six athletes have demonstrated what it takes to be a true Wheaties Champion.

Bob Richards

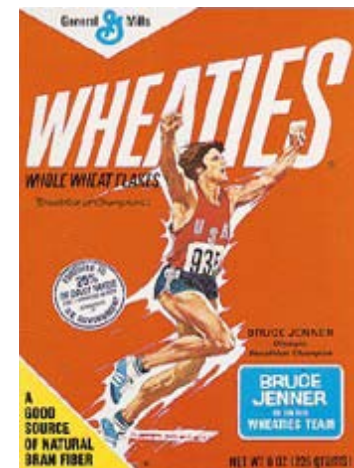
A two-time gold medalist in the pole vault, Richards was named the first Wheaties spokesperson in 1958. Richards was a well-known crusader for fitness, and as the first director of the Wheaties Sports Federation, he promoted physical fitness and athletic participation to the youth of America.

Bruce Jenner

A gold medalist in the decathlon, Jenner was named a Wheaties spokesperson in 1977. For his tireless efforts to promote physical fitness, Jenner also was named the second director of the Wheaties Sports Federation. Today, Jenner continues to promote physical fitness and is a loyal supporter of numerous charitable organizations.

Bruce Jenner: 1977

Track & Field



Mary Lou Retton

Gymnast Mary Lou Retton captured the hearts of America with her gold medal performance and became the first female Wheaties spokesperson later that year. Today, Retton continues to touch the lives of millions with her charitable work and as the national chairperson of the Children's Miracle Network.

Walter Payton

Football legend Walter Payton was named an official Wheaties spokesperson in 1986. Payton established the The Walter Payton Foundation in 1988 to provide support for children's educational programs, as well as programs assisting abused or neglected children. Although he has passed away, The Walter Payton Foundation continues to help thousands of children every year.

Chris Evert

In 1987, tennis superstar Chris Evert, winner of 157 women's singles titles, including 18 Grand Slam events,

became the second woman to serve as a Wheaties spokesperson. Evert championed numerous causes for children and formed Chris Evert Charities, Inc., a nonprofit organization designed to help improve the lives of children, preserve and strengthen families, and promote healthy, drug-free lifestyles.

Michael Jordan

In 1988, basketball superstar Michael Jordan, holder of six NBA championship rings, five regular-season MVP awards and six NBA finals MVP crowns, was named a Wheaties spokesperson. A legend on the court, Jordan's efforts off the court are legendary as well. Jordan has supported numerous charitable organizations including the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, UNCF (United Negro College Fund) and the Ronald McDonald House.

Wheaties Fun Facts

- The first athlete to appear on a Wheaties box – the back of the package – was baseball great Lou Gehrig in 1934.
- The 1987 World Champion Minnesota Twins were the first team to appear on the package.
- The first non-orange Wheaties box was released in 1992. The red and black package honored the NBA Champion Chicago Bulls.
- In 1934, Aviator Elinor Smith became the first female to appear on the back of the Wheaties box.
- Babe Didrikson became the first female athlete to appear on the Wheaties box – the back of the package – in 1935.
- In 1926, Wheaties pioneered the singing radio commercial with “Have You Tried Wheaties?”
- Wheaties sponsored the first televised commercial sports broadcast when, on August 29, 1939, NBC presented a baseball game between the Cincinnati Reds and the Brooklyn Dodgers for some 500 owners of television sets in New York City.
- The first athlete to appear on the front of a Wheaties box was decathlon gold medallist Bob Richards in 1958.
- The first woman to appear on the front of a Wheaties box was gold medal gymnast Mary Lou Retton in 1984.
- The first race car driver to appear on the front of a Wheaties box was Dale Earnhardt in 1997.
- The first football player to appear on the front of a Wheaties box was Walter Payton in 1986.
- The 1991 Stanley Cup Champion Pittsburgh Penguins were the first hockey team to appear on the Wheaties package.
- Lee Trevino became the first golfer to appear on the front of a Wheaties box in 1969.
- Michael Jordan has appeared on the Wheaties box more than any other athlete – 18 times, including appearances with the NBA champion Chicago Bulls in 1991, 1993 and 1995.

CHAMPIONS LIST

This list is not all-inclusive, and will be updated frequently.

2009 - 2000

Los Angeles Lakers
Basketball: 2009

Hunter Kemper
Triathlon: 2009

Willis Reed
Basketball: 2009

Detroit Shock
Basketball: 2008

Nastia Liukin
Gymnastics: 2008

Bryan Clay
Decathlon: 2008

Boston Celtics
Basketball: 2008

Jarrod Shoemaker
Triathlon: 2008

Boston Red Sox
Baseball: 2007

Phoenix Mercury
Basketball: 2007

Tony Gwynn
Baseball: 2007

San Antonio Spurs
Basketball: 2007

Hunter Kemper
Triathlon: 2007

Florida Gators
Men's Basketball: 2007

Bill Russell
Basketball: 2007

University of Kentucky
Men's Basketball: 2007

University of North Carolina
Men's Basketball: 2007

University of Tennessee
Lady Vols Basketball: 2007

St. Louis Cardinals
Baseball: 2006

Detroit Shock
Basketball: 2006

University of Georgia
Football: 2006

University of Michigan
Football: 2006

University of Notre Dame
Football: 2006

University of Texas
Football: 2006

Texas A&M University
Football: 2006

Doug Flutie
Football: 2006

Miami Heat
Basketball: 2006

Alex Rodriguez
Baseball: 2006

Steve Nash
Basketball: 2006

Joey Cheek
Long Track Speedskating: 2006

Apolo Anton Ohno
Short Track Speedskating: 2006

Julius "Dr. J" Erving
Basketball: 2006

University of Texas
Football: 2006

Texas Western College
Basketball: 2005

Chicago White Sox
Baseball: 2005

Sacramento Monarchs
Basketball: 2005

Roberto Clemente
Baseball: 2005

Kirk Gibson
Baseball: 2005

San Antonio Spurs
Basketball: 2005

Albert Pujols
Baseball: 2005

Shaquille O'Neal
Basketball: 2005

Tim Duncan
Basketball: 2005

Peyton Manning
Football: 2004

Boston Red Sox
Baseball: 2004

Pedro Martinez
Baseball: 2004

Michael Phelps
Swimming: 2004

Carly Patterson
Gymnastics: 2004

Carl Lewis
Track & Field: 2004

Jackie Joyner-Kersey
Track & Field: 2004

Detroit Pistons
Basketball: 2004

Andre Agassi
Tennis: 2004

David Robinson
Basketball: 2004

Kevin Garnett
Basketball: 2003

Joe Paterno
Coaching Great: 2003

San Antonio Spurs
Basketball: 2003

Tampa Bay Buccaneers
Football: 2003

Darrell Waltrip
Auto Racing: 2003

Wayne Gretzky
Hockey: 2003

Jesse Owens
Track & Field: 2003

Emmitt Smith
Football: 2002

Ozzie Smith
Baseball: 2002

Cael Sanderson
Wrestling: 2002

Hank Aaron
Baseball: 2002

Sarah Hughes
Figure Skating: 2002

New England Patriots
Football: 2002

Jim Thorpe
American Athlete: 2001

Cal Ripken Jr.
Baseball: 2001

Dave Winfield/ Kirby Puckett
Baseball: 2001

Althea Gibson
Tennis: 2001

Pete Sampras
Tennis: 2000

Walter Payton
Football: 2000

St. Louis Rams
Football: 2000

1999 - 1990

Arnold Palmer
Golf: 1999

Lance Armstrong
Cycling: 1999

Joe Torre
Baseball: 1999

Mia Hamm
Women's Soccer: 1999

Brandi Chastain
Women's Soccer: 1999

Barry Sanders
Football: 1999

Muhammad Ali
Boxing: 1999

Brett Favre
Football: 1998

Arizona Diamondbacks
Baseball: 1998

Denver Broncos
Football: 1998

U.S. Gold Medal Team
Women's Hockey: 1998

Richard Petty
Auto Racing: 1998

U.S. Gold Medal Team
Men's Hockey: 1997

Franco Harris
Football: 1997

Arthur Ashe
Tennis: 1997

Roger Staubach
Football: 1996

Tom Dolan
Swimming: 1996

Amy Van Dyken
Swimming: 1996

Dan O'Brien
Track & Field: 1996

Michael Johnson
Track: 1996

U.S. Gold Medal Team
Women's Gymnastics: 1996

Steve Young
Football: 1996

Dale Earnhardt
Auto Racing: 1996

Jackie Robinson
Baseball: 1996

Cal Ripken Jr.
Baseball: 1995

Dan Marino
Football: 1995

John Elway
Football: 1993

Barry Sanders
Football: 1992

Babe Ruth
Baseball: 1992

1989 - 1980

Jim Palmer
Baseball: 1989

Johnny Bench
Baseball: 1989

Steve Largent
Football: 1988

Michael Jordan
Basketball: 1988

Chris Evert
Tennis: 1987

Walter Payton
Football: 1986

Mary Lou Retton
Gymnastics: 1984

1979 - 1970

Bruce Jenner
Track & Field: 1977

1969 - 1960

Bob Richards
Track & Field: 1969

Tom Matte
Football: 1968

Bobby Richardson
Baseball: 1967

Tim McCarver
Baseball: 1967

Joe Horlen
Baseball: 1967

Raymond Berry
Football: 1967

Lt. Billy Mills
Track: 1966

Tom Tresh
Baseball: 1964

Bart Starr
Football: 1964

1959 - 1939

Esther Williams
Swimming: 1959

Duke Snider
Baseball: 1956

Bobby Layne
Football: 1956

Bob Cousy
Basketball: 1956

Bob Waterfield
Football: 1952

Preacher Roe
Baseball: 1952

Glenn Davis
Football: 1952

Roy Campanella
Baseball: 1952

Ralph Kiner
Baseball: 1951

Johnny Lujack
Football: 1951

Bob Lemon
Baseball: 1951

George Kell
Baseball: 1951

Otto Graham
Football: 1951

Tom Fears
Football: 1951

Hank Greenberg
Baseball: 1947

Johnny Mize
Baseball: 1939

Leo Durocher
Baseball: 1939