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G. Larry James Named Honorary Official for 2008 Penn Relay Carnival

Olympian, Wall of Fame Inductee to Receive Honor

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Philadelphia, PA – G. Larry James, Dean of Athletics and Recreational Programs and Services at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, has been named Honorary Official for the 2008 edition of the Penn Relays Carnival.

James, a gold and silver medalist at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, is one of the greatest performers in the history of the Penn Relays, America's oldest and largest track and field event. He will be recognized during ceremonies taking place during the Saturday events at Franklin Field, April 26. The ceremony is expected to happen between 2 and 3 p.m., depending on how the day's track event schedule progresses.

Already a 1995 inductee to the Penn Relays Wall of Fame, James said he was gratified to be honored once again at the scene of some of his greatest athletic triumphs.

"It is a great honor to be selected as Honorary Official at the Relays," he said. "I'm certainly looking forward to seeing a lot of familiar faces and to be back at one of the world's great track events."

James, nicknamed "the Mighty Burner" for his blazing on-track exploits, was honored for four decades of excellence by Stockton last December. The College renamed its track and main outdoor athletic facility G. Larry James Stadium at an event which drew over 1,000 attendees including James' teammates on the world-record setting 4 x 400 meter relay: Vince Matthews, Ron Freeman, and Lee Evans.

Also in attendance were Olympic bronze medalist John Carlos and teammates and friends from his days at Villanova University, where James performed his Penn Relays heroics. Villanovans on hand included fellow gold-medal-winning Olympian Don Bragg, Olympian Marty Liquori and Dave Patrick, the 1968 NCAA 1,500-meter champion.

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As a collegian under legendary Hall of Fame Coach “Jumbo” Jim Elliot, Larry James won the NCAA 440 championship in 1970 and NCAA 440 indoor crowns in 1968, 1969 and 1970. He also won two gold medals at the World University games and numerous Penn Relays watches. The 1968 Villanova team, the first ever to win five Championship of America relays will have a 40th Anniversary reunion at the Relays this year. James was a member of that team, as well of the 1969 and 1970 squads which accomplished the same achievement.

What local track and field fans might remember most fondly was his 440 anchor leg at the 1968 Penn Relays. Overcoming a 15-yard deficit to Rice University, James ran his anchor leg in 43.9 seconds, the fastest ever in the history of the Relays, powering the Wildcats to the 4 x 440 Championship of America title.

“Just thinking about that still gives me chills,” teammate Dave Patrick said. “It was probably the greatest performance I ever witnessed.”

James went on to set a world record in the 400 meters in the 1968 Olympic Trials and won a gold medal running the third leg of the 4 x 400 relay, setting the world record of 2:56.16 seconds, a record which stood for 34 years. He earned an individual silver medal in the 400 meters, bettering the world record in 43.97 seconds, but placing just behind Lee Evans’ gold-medal-winning 43.86 seconds.

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