



NAVIGATOR

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Italian Icons

Chicago salutes Italian-American athletes

Chicago's Little Italy just got bigger. As a welcome addition to the neighborhood's numerous Italian restaurants and shops, a 44,000-square-foot tribute to Italian-American athletes is opening this fall. Located on Taylor Street (near the Racine stop of the Blue Line 'L'), in the heart of Chicago's dynamic Italian-American community, the **National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame** is *the* place to challenge your sports IQ with three-dimensional sports trivia. Housed in the hall's four-story building is an inspiring Gallery of Champions—a mural honoring famed sports figures such as Joe DiMaggio, Vince Lombardi and Mario Andretti. Alongside the mural are exhibits highlighting champions such as boxer Rocky Marciano, whose record of 49-0 (43 knockouts) has yet to be equaled. Other noteworthy displays include the tribute showcase to Olympians, featuring memorabilia such as the slippers that gymnast Mary Lou Retton wore when she achieved a perfect 10 at the 1984 Olympics; and swimmer Matt Biondi's collection of 11 medals. Visitors can also get into the spirit of the game via an exciting basketball exhibit with courtside legend Dick Vitale narrating play-by-play accounts of Italian-American hoop dreams. For fans of the speedway, the interactive motor sports display with full-size race cars helps re-create the super-charged atmosphere of a racetrack. Meanwhile, those looking for a true red, white and green history lesson can visit the heritage area, which is devoted to identifying the Italian-American immigrant experience. Another hit is the hall's boxing exhibit, which packs an informative punch by tracing the history of boxing greats back to 1895. Close to the ring resides one of the Hall of Fame's greatest treasures in the baseball exhibit—a must-see baseball glove worn by the great DiMaggio. —*Elio Iannacci*

**National Italian American
Sports Hall of Fame, Chicago**
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*Little Italy's All-Stars:
Photo of boxing champ
Rocky Marciano on
display at Chicago's
National Italian
American Sports Hall
of Fame (top); bronze
tribute to Joe DiMaggio,
across from the Hall of
Fame (left)*

Wheaton Central High School, where he was crowned Homecoming King