

Niagara's Greatest Professional Athletes of All Time

County has produced roster of sport superstars who made history

Daryl "Moose" Johnston (Football, born 1966): This Youngstown native and 1984 Lew-Port graduate can be easily considered Niagara County's all time greatest for his pivotal role in one of the NFL's greatest dynasties. A Syracuse All-American fullback, he was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys in 1989 and became the ultimate blocker, paving lanes for Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith (NFL's all-time leading rusher) while excelling on special teams. His hardware includes three Super Bowl championships, Pro Bowl nods (1993, 1994), and 2,227 receiving yards and 753 rushing yards despite minimal carries. Post-retirement, he was a respected broadcast analyst and executive. Legacy: Without "Moose," those Cowboy teams might not have dominated the '90s — pure grit and team-first mentality. He lives in Dallas.



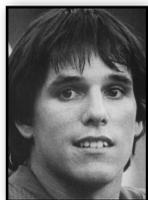
Sal "The Barber" Maglie (Baseball, 1917-1992): Maglie became a Niagara icon through his intense pitching during MLB's golden era. In 1945, at age 28, he debuted for the New York Giants, gaining the nickname "The Barber" for his high-inside fastballs that closely "shaved" batters' chins. Career: 119 wins, 3.15 ERA across 10 seasons with the NY Giants, Brooklyn Dodgers, Yankees, and others; two All-Star nods; a no-hitter in 1956; and key roles in the 1951 Giants' "Shot Heard 'Round the World" comeback pennant and the 1954 Giants World Series title. Legacy: At 39, he posted 13-5 for the Dodgers in 1956, aiding their pennant drive. With a win-loss record of 119-62, Maglie was a fierce competitor, capturing the post-war baseball's raw passion. A local and national legend, he was born and died in Niagara Falls, NY.



Rashad "Suga" Evans (MMA, born 1979): In a modern combat sport demanding all-around skill, Evans stands out as one of Niagara's most acclaimed champions. Starting as a wrestler at Niagara-Wheatfield high school, and then at Michigan State, he exploded in the UFC, winning The Ultimate Fighter in 2005 and capturing the Light Heavyweight title in 2008 with a dominant decision over Forrest Griffin. He retired with a 24-5-1 record, including knockouts of Chuck Liddell and Dan Henderson. Legacy: As "Suga," he bridged the wrestling and striking eras in MMA's boom, earning Fighter of the Year in 2008 and influencing fighters like Jon Jones. He currently lives in Florida.

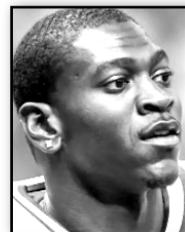


Rick Manning (Baseball, born 1954): A 1972 graduate of LaSalle High School, Manning was a defensive wizard who brought Gold Glove flair to MLB outfielders. The #2 MLB draft pick, he played 13 seasons with the Cleveland Indians and White Sox, hitting .257 with 44 homers and 397 RBIs. Accolades: 1976 All-Star; 1976 Gold Glove (led AL outfielders in putouts), and a .982 career fielding percentage. Legacy: His speed and arm (228 assists) defined '70s center field excellence.



Dean Biasucci (Football, born 1962): Born in Niagara Falls, Biasucci moved to Florida at age 8. He was a kicker in the NFL, spending 13 seasons mostly with the Indianapolis Colts (1982-1995), converting 336 of 507 field goals (66.3%) and 485 of 490 extra points (99%) for 1,764 points (top-50 all-time). Legacy: Pro Bowl in 1987; led the league in scoring (1987, 1990); and nailed game-winners in high-stakes games.

James Starks (Football, born 1986): This Niagara Falls High School graduate starred at the University at Buffalo, rushing for a school-record 3,140 yards and 40 TDs, including two 1,000-yard seasons. Legacy: A sixth-round pick by the Green Bay Packers in 2010, the versatile RB played seven NFL seasons, totaling 2,506 rushing yards and earning a Super Bowl XLV ring for his playoff bursts. He was inducted in the Greater Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame. He lives in Austin, Texas.



Adam Clendening (Hockey, born 1992): Raised in Wheatfield, he excelled at Boston University, earning Hockey East First Team honors with 33 points in his junior year. Drafted 36th overall by Chicago in 2011, the puck-moving defenseman logged 90 NHL games across teams like the Blackhawks and Rangers, while leading AHL scoring for Rockford.



Honorable Mentions

Ludy "Lil" Villani (1912-2010) was a renowned bowler and one of the founders of the Professional Bowlers Association. However, he was born in Pennsylvania, and not Niagara County.

William G. Morgan (1870-1942). While not a professional athlete, he was a phys ed teacher who invented the game of volleyball in 1895. It became an Olympic sport in 1964. He was born and died in Lockport, NY.

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