

EARL MCCREADY

Inducted by Teddy Gordienko

Earl McCready is the most decorated amateur wrestler ever to turn pro in Canada. “The Moose” wasn’t just a journeyman pro either, but a top-notch competitor for his 28-year career, competing on mats around the globe and fighting for the world title on numerous occasions.

Born in Lansdowne, Ontario in 1908, but raised on a farm near Amulet, Saskatchewan, McCready dreamed of becoming a doctor. Legend has it that he ordered a book on *How to Handle Big Men With Ease* and learned to wrestle from it. Working on the farm made him solid and tough.

In 1926, McCready went to New Westminster, B.C. for the Canadian amateur wrestling championship. He took the heavyweight crown, but more importantly, impressed three grapplers from Oklahoma A&M university (now Oklahoma State). They returned to their school and convinced their coach, the renowned Doc Gallagher, that the 220-pounder was worth a look. McCready was offered an athletic scholarship.

McCready won every match he was in for three years at Oklahoma A&M. McCready also took the heavyweight title in each of the first three NCAA wrestling tournaments from 1928-1930. Back in Canada, McCready won two more Canadian amateur titles and represented his country at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam, where he was also the flag-bearer in the opening ceremonies. In 1930, he took a gold medal in freestyle at 100 kg at the first British Empire Games in Hamilton, Ontario. While at Oklahoma A&M, McCready played football and worked part-time waiting tables and tending furnaces. He graduated with a degree in physical education.

Having triumphed in the amateur ranks, McCready turned pro in late 1930. He was a quick study, taking what he could from teachers such as Jack Taylor. His reputation preceded him, and by 1932, McCready had a shot at the world title held by Jim Londos.

McCready made his first of 13 trips to New Zealand and Australia in 1935. The wrestling there was different than the North American version, with eight rounds being contested, with breaks in between.

“McCready was the standard by which New Zealanders measured all men and he was a worthy criterion,” wrote Paul Boesch in his autobiography.

Lord James Blears first met McCready in New Zealand. “They liked him down there. He was very respected,” Blears said. “He’d wrestle with anybody. Some big bully figures he wants to be a wrestler, put him in with Earl McCready and he’d straighten him out. They started out at 5-foot-11, and they wound up 6-foot-6. He stretched them!”

Besides Oceania, McCready made trips to England, South Africa and Latin America. In the early '50s, McCready worked for Stu Hart’s fledgling Stampede Wrestling promotion between trips to New Zealand. McCready retired from the ring after 28 years, and settled in Edmonds, Washington, where he ran a massage parlor. He dealt with diabetes for the last 40 years of his life. Osteomyelitis claimed his left leg in 1964, forcing him to use a wooden leg. His other foot was broken getting off a bus and complications forced that foot to be amputated.

McCready died of a heart attack in Seattle in December 1983. His many accomplishments are celebrated through his inductions into the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame, the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, the U.S. Wrestling Hall of Fame, the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame, the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame and the Stampede Wrestling Hall of Fame.

— Greg Oliver