



2012 ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS SAINT PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

JACKIE SMITH SELECTED GRAND MARSHAL OF 2012 HIBERNIAN SAINT PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

St. Louis--The Ancient Order of Hibernians have named Hall of Fame Football player Jackie Smith the Grand Marshal of their 29th Annual Saint Patrick's Day Parade. The annual Irish gala gets underway at 12:30 p.m. Saturday, March 17, Saint Patrick's Day. Sponsored by the St. Louis and St. Louis County Hibernians, the parade honors Saint Patrick as the Apostle of Ireland and highlights the contributions of both Irish and Irish-Americans have to the United States.

Parade officials selected Smith, All-Pro Tight End with the St. Louis Cardinals from 1963-1977, in recognition of his support to the City of St. Louis and the St. Louis Irish-American community. Smith played in five straight Pro Bowls, and was named All-NFL in 1967 and 1969. He and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio in 2001.

"I am honored to be selected by the Hibernians to lead this year's parade. I am Irish on my mother's side, and my brother was born on March 17, so I have a couple of reasons to celebrate this year. I grew up in a place in the South where there wasn't a whole lot of celebrating of St. Patrick's Day, so I guess I am making up for lost time. The best part is having my family with me in the parade to celebrate," Smith said.

Smith, a 6-4, 235-pound tight end, was a St. Louis Cardinals fixture for 15 years. He finished his career with the Dallas Cowboys in 1978. At the time of his retirement, he ranked as the all-time receiver among tight ends with 480 receptions for 7,918 yards and 40 touchdowns.

An outstanding football and track competitor at Northwestern Louisiana, Smith was the Cardinals' 10th-round draft pick in 1963. Smith was a talented receiver, a punishing blocker, a fierce competitor and an excellent runner after he caught the ball. He even handled the Cardinals' punting chores his first three seasons.

Smith became the Cardinals' starting tight end during his 1963 rookie season and remained a fixture at that spot the rest of his tenure in St. Louis. He gave notice of things to come when he gained 212 yards on nine receptions against Pittsburgh that year.

The team's offensive co-captain, Smith had one string of 45 straight games from 1967 to 1970, with at least one reception. He played in 121 straight games starting with his first NFL contest and continuing until a knee injury sidelined him in his ninth season in 1971.

Injuries slowed him again in 1975 and 1976 but Smith still played in 198 games. Smith played in five straight Pro Bowls from 1967 through 1971, and was named All-NFL in 1967 and 1969. He had his single season best performance in 1967 when he recorded 56 receptions for 1,205 yards and nine - touchdowns.

During his career, he caught more than 40 passes seven different years. His 16.5-yard average per reception is a reflection of both his excellent speed and determined running style.

This year's AOH Saint Patrick's Day Parade is dedicated Firefighters, Law Enforcement Officers, Public Safety personnel and Union members killed in the line of duty since September 11, 2001. Among those being recognized as distinguished honorees during this year's parade will be firefighters and law enforcement officers from St. Louis City and St. Louis County.

The honorees include Police Officer Jeff Trares of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, Police Officer Kevin Quinlisk, of the Bridgeton Police Department, Firefighter Capt. Bruce Williams, the St. Louis Fire Department and Firefighter Mark Woolbright, of the Pattonville Fire Department. Also being recognized is Jim O'Mara, Pipefitters 562 (ret) AOH 2012 Labor Leader and St. Louis City Circuit Judge Mark O'Neill as the AOH 2012 Civic Leader.

"This year's parade promises to be another great one, with over 100 colorful floats and marching units featuring the contributions of the Irish people to America," according to parade organizer, Jim Mohan.

"Like traditional Saint Patrick's Day parades held in Ireland, many St. Louis Irish will march under their family crests and banners," he added.

The AOH parades passes through one of St. Louis' oldest Irish neighborhoods. The 2012 AOH parade will start south of the Tamm Avenue overpass at Oakland Avenue, traveling south on Tamm Avenue, past St. James the Greater Catholic Church, and ends at Manchester.

More information on the parade and the Ancient Order of Hibernians can be found at:

http://www.stlhibernians.com/events2/2012/stp/st_patricks_day_parade_dogtown_2012.html