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## UKRAINIAN SPORTS HALL OF FAME INDUCTS ZENON BILAS

Zenon Bilas, eight-time US national barefoot waterskiing champion, has been inducted into the Ukrainian Sports Hall of Fame. The United States-based organization honors teams, coaches and athletes born in Ukraine or of Ukrainian descent.

Bilas's parents immigrated to the US in 1955, settling in Chicago. On summer weekends, his family would go to nearby Round Lake, Illinois where the Ukrainian community had a sports and recreation club. There, he quickly mastered waterskiing and, later, barefooting.

An unusual sport, barefoot waterskiing incorporates tricks and slalom events. At the age of 56, Bilas won a gold medal in the open division at the 2018 USA Barefoot Water Ski National Championships. The world-class athlete continues to compete and coach, and is a renowned magazine contributor and speaker.

"My career has taken me all over the world, yet I still hold fast to the values and love of my culture that I learned on the shore of that small lake in Illinois," said Bilas. "I'm excited to bring my love of watersports and Ukrainian heritage together like this."

With his induction, Bilas joins such notable Ukrainian athletes as NFL coach Mike Ditka, NHL superstar Wayne Gretzky, figure skater Oksana Baiul and soccer superstar Andriy Shevchenko. He will join his fellow

inductees at a ceremony at the Ukrainian Sports Hall of Fame and Museum later this year.

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