

Olympic silver medalist Sam Kendricks: A champion in pole vault and at First Church, Oxford

By Tony Martin
Editor

Oxford native Sam Kendricks is an American pole vaulter. According to Wikipedia, he is a three-time indoor and six-time outdoor national champion (2014–2019), the 2016 Olympics bronze and 2024 Olympics silver medalist, and the 2017 and 2019 World Champion. In 2019, Kendricks set the American pole vault record at 6.06 m, tying him with Steve Hooker for fourth all time. He later won the gold medal at the World Championships in Doha.

While vaulting for the University of Mississippi, Kendricks won the 2013 and 2014 NCAA Championships. He broke both Ole Miss Rebels pole vault records as a freshman.

He is the first Ole Miss graduate to place during the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, officially known as the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad.

Kendricks claimed the silver medal in the men's pole vault event August 5 after clearing a distance of 5.95 meters. Sweden's Armand Duplantis took home the gold while Greece's Emmanouil Karalis won the bronze.¹

What isn't as well-known is that Kendricks is a Christian and a member of First Church, Oxford.

"Sam Kendricks is the real deal," said First Church, Oxford, pastor Don Gann. "He loves the Lord. He is a solid husband and

father. He is active in church (when he's not in Paris). He's in the Army Reserve as an officer."

Kendricks' silver medal comes eight years after he won his first Olympic medal – a bronze medal at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio.

"At the end of the day, I'm on the track, I'm bleeding, and the end of the story is Mondo (Armand Duplantis) set the world record, but I snared myself a silver medal along the way," Kendricks said, showing his hand to reporters, while referring to spiking his hand on his first 6.00m attempt.

Kendricks' stellar performance is redemption, coming three years after he was sent into quarantine after a positive COVID-19 test at Tokyo 2020, forcing the six-time U.S. national champion to miss the Olympic pole vault competition in Japan.

"A great man once told me that you don't go to the Olympics to win," Kendricks said. "You go to represent. Team USA, we fight for the privilege just to wear this flag. It's a hard-fought privilege."²

In referencing gold medal winner Armand "Mondo" Duplantis, Kendricks said, half-jokingly, "I hate that we lost him to Sweden, I wish we could get him back to America one of these days." Duplantis, who grew up partially in Louisiana and part-time in Sweden, is a dual citizen.

"Sam is a great role model of how to handle God-given success," said Gann. "He is well-liked and treats people like they matter. I think I speak for everyone at FBC, Oxford... I'm very proud of him and would be even if he wasn't an Olympic champion."

"There is no greater joy than being in the Olympic stadium and being welcomed in front of a crowd that is loving and supporting," Kendricks said. "I never want to be without it

for any reason ever again.”³

1

<https://www.si.com/college/olemiss/other-sports/sold-on-silver-former-ole-miss-track-and-field-star-sam-kendricks-wins-medal-in-olympics-01j4j8j3sm5x>

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<https://www.teamusa.com/news/2024/august/05/-mondo-duplantis-shatters-world-record-defends-gold-medal-as-sam-kendricks-soars-to-silver>

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<https://www.reuters.com/sports/olympics/athletics-us-pole-vaulter-kendricks-broken-tokyo-covid-saga-2024-08-03/>