

## NJSIAA 2022 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

The 24th Annual High School Hall of Fame ceremony gives us the opportunity to honor the following individuals – most deserving of our recognition.

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### **ROBERT AURIEMMA** **Brick Twp HS** **Ice Hockey Coach**

When assembling a list of the most important figures in the history of New Jersey high school hockey, Robert Auriemma owns a place near the top.

He was the coach at Brick for 51 years, from 1964 through the 2016-17 season. He won a state-record 729 games along the way, which also ranks third nationally. His teams won six NJSIAA championships, including the first two in 1976 and '77, along with five public school titles. His teams also won the Gordon Cup eight times, and also brought home four Shore Conference titles.

A native of Rahway, he moved to West New York, where he played football under legendary coaches Joe Coviello and Warren Wolf. His next stop was Colby College in Maine, where he played football and also took up hockey prior to his graduation in 1959. He was asked to play because the team needed someone to play goalie, and the rest is history.

His association with Wolf, who was becoming an important figure in Brick, brought him to the Ocean County school. He worked as an assistant football coach under Wolf (from 1962 to '80), and was also Wolf's hockey assistant for several years before taking over as head coach. He remained a math teacher at Brick until retiring in 2012.

He also had the foresight in 1969 to help found the Brick Hockey Club, which not only fed the Brick program, but helped grow the sport around the Shore.

Among the many he coached was Jim Dowd, who is considered the greatest hockey player in state history. Dowd was part of Brick's 1986 state championship-winning team, won a NCAA championship at Lake Superior State and Stanley Cup with the New Jersey Devils. "Playing for Coach Auriemma was irreplaceable," Dowd said. "The most important thing that he taught us was hard work, listen, be a student in everything that you do. He taught us things way beyond hockey. He taught us right from wrong, how to do the right thing. I love him and would do anything for him."

Auriemma, who has always made it a point to share credit for any success his teams achieved, is still visible on the the Brick hockey scene, and for good reason. A father of five children, 19 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren, two of his great-grandchildren, Jake and Kevin Toyne, are mainstays on the current Brick team.



## **JOETTA CLARK DIGGS** **Columbia HS** **Athlete - Track**

Joetta Clark Diggs is four-time Olympian, a motivational specialist, businesswoman, author, television/radio personality, fitness advocate and more.

A native of South Orange, she graduated from Columbia High School in 1980, where her career was so spectacular that she was later named Female Track Athlete of the 20th Century by the Star-Ledger. During her Columbia career, she won four NJSIAA Meet of Champions 800-meter outdoor titles, an indoor Meet of Champions title in the 1,500 and set a state record in the 800 outdoors that held for 32 years. She never lost an 800-meter race while in high school.

Among her many other high school accomplishments, when Columbia initiated its Athletic Hall of Fame in 2006 to honor greats from its more than 100-year history, she was a charter inductee, along with two other Athletes of the Century and a 15-year NBA player. After a tremendous college career at the University of Tennessee, where she was later inducted into its Hall of Fame, she went on to represent the United States at the Olympic Games in 1988, 1992, 1996 and 2000.

During her 24-year career as a half-mile runner, she was ranked among the Top 10 Americans in over 21 of those years. From 1991 to '98, she was ranked in the Top 10 in the world and was an 11-time National Champion. She set world and American records and captured World Championship medals and served as captain of the Women's USA team in 2000. All told, she ran for more than 28 consecutive years, never missing an indoor or outdoor season. She ran in every outdoor USA Championship or Olympic trials between 1979 and 2000.

After retiring as an elite athlete, in 2002 she began the Joetta Clark Diggs Sports Foundation, to promote involvement with physical activities for girls and boys in grades K-12. The foundation is committed to teaching good health and a positive work ethic, focusing on the correlation between achievement in academics and athletics. She has also become a highly-sought motivational speaker, and is President of Joetta Sports and Beyond LLC, where she delivers messages of health, fitness and empowerment to corporations, colleges, medical programs and civic organizations. She authored a book entitled "Joetta's 'P' Principals for Success: Life Lessons Learned from Track and Fields." She also has a perfume and body scrub called "Joetta."

Among her other honors, she was chosen by Sports Illustrated in 1998 as a Hometown Hero. She is a member of multiple halls of fame, including the New Jersey Hall of Fame, the USA Track & Field Hall of Fame, the Penn Relays Hall of Fame, the University of Tennessee Hall of Fame, and the Millrose Games Hall of Fame at Madison Square Garden. She has also been inducted into the New Jersey Hall of Fame.



**WILLIAM “MICKEY” CORCORAN\***  
**Northern Highlands HS &  
River Dell Regional HS  
Contributor/Administrator**

William Joseph Corcoran was born in Englewood on May 4, 1922. But when you are later given a nickname by one of the famous coaches in the history of American sports, it's bound to stick.

As a high schooler, Corcoran attended St. Cecilia's in Englewood, where he played football and basketball under an up-and-coming coach named Vince Lombardi. Because he was undersized, Lombardi took to calling him “Mickey Mouse,” which was later shortened to Mickey, which became the name he was called up until his death at age 93 in 2015.

Active in local sports up until his passing, he became one of the most influential figures ever in Bergen County athletics. He served in the Navy with John Wooden, coached and became a life-long mentor to Bill Parcells and even advised Bergen County game officials who rose to top-of-profession roles like Tim Higgins (NCAA basketball) and Ed Camp (NFL).

After serving in World War II, he graduated from Springfield College in 1948 with a degree in mathematics. After teaching and coaching in the Bronx, he moved to River Dell High School, where he coached Parcells, and then to Northern Highlands in 1967. He was athletic director and basketball coach for 18 years. In his early years there, he was ahead of many of his peers in establishing varsity sports programs for girls.

His long friendship with Parcells, which began when the future Hall of Fame football coach played on his teams at River Dell, was well-chronicled, especially when Parcells frequently had him by his side while coaching the Giants.

“He was everything a 14-year old guy needed,” Parcells said of his early days with Corcoran. “He was a coach, a teacher, a disciplinarian.”

During the course of Corcoran's career, he was also a long-time referee, was a founder of the Bergen County Coaches Association, and was instrumental in the development of the Bergen County Jamboree boys basketball tournament. He received just about every honor and lifetime achieve award that's bestowed in high school sports in the area, including having the gym at Northern Highlands named in his honor. He also did work with the NJSIAA, including assigning basketball officials for the state tournament and serving as a golf chairman.

*\*Posthumous Award.*



## **VIRGINIA DUENKEL FULDNER**

### **West Orange HS**

### **Athlete - Swimming**

Imagine being a national champion, world-record holder and Olympic gold medalist, all by the time you were barely a month into your senior year of high school.

In the case of Virginia (Ginny) Duenkel, that's exactly what happened.

The West Orange native, who graduated from her hometown high school in 1965, burst on global swimming scene in the early '60s. She won her first national championship at age 15 in 1962, winning the 200 meter backstroke in a world-record time. She added three more national championships in 1963 - taking the 200 yard and 200 meter backstroke and 1500 meter backstroke. She also won a gold in the 400 meter medley relay at the 1963 Pan American Games in Brazil.

All of that set the stage for what happened in Tokyo, Japan, at the Olympic Games during October of 1964.

While her friends were beginning their senior year back in West Orange, Ginny was setting out to achieve Olympic glory. It wouldn't be easy, since her two best events - the 200 backstroke and 1500 freestyle - were not contested at the Olympics. She had to instead compete in shorter events, the 100 meter backstroke and 400 meter freestyle, neither of which she had won at the U.S. nationals or Olympic trials.

Competing first in the 100, she took the bronze after placing third by just a tenth of a second behind the winner. Two days later came the 400, where she was given little chance considering the incredible strength of the field, which featured four world record holders. Instead, Ginny beat them all in a stunning performance.

She returned home to a resounding welcome, but with a twist. In those pre-Title IX days, there was no decision to make on whether to swim for West Orange or compete on a higher level. There was no girls swim team at her school, so there was not a choice to make.

Beyond West Orange, she attended the University of Michigan, where she won several collegiate championships while setting additional records. She's remained active in the sport as a coach. She was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 1985.

One of her biggest honors came after West Orange built a municipal pool complex in 1967, which was named the Ginny Duenkel Pool. The honor has meant that generations of town residents have associated her name with fun and recreation.

She has lived with her husband, Chris, in Missouri since the late 1970s. She started a swim team, the Water Thrashers, that has grown over the decades into a popular program. The Chris and Ginny Fuldner Aquatic Center in Monett, Missouri is named in their honor.



**CHRIS FORD**  
**Holy Spirit HS**  
**Athlete - Basketball**

Chris Ford was not only a basketball star, but one of the top athletes to ever hail from Atlantic County. To prove it, his high school and college jerseys were both retired, he won a NBA championship and even became the answer to a popular trivia question. And to top it all off, he was also a long time head coach in the league.

Born Jan. 11, 1949 in Atlantic City, he first achieved greatness at Holy Spirit High School in Absecon, where he graduated in 1968. A 6-5 shooting guard, he scored 1,507 points during his career there, and averaged 33 points per game as a senior. His play was so sensational that the school announced the retirement of his No. 42 jersey during his final season.

His next stop was Villanova, where he played from 1969 through '72 and scored 1,433 points. He helped the Wildcats to a runner-up finish to UCLA in the 1971 NCAA tournament. That year, he averaged 13.8 points, 5.8 rebounds and passed for a school-record 238 assists. Villanova later retired his No. 42 jersey.

He was selected by the Detroit Pistons in the second round of the the 1972 NBA Draft, and was mostly a starter throughout his six years with the team. He was acquired by the Boston Celtics early in the 1978-79 season, where he became an important early piece in the Celtics dynasty. He averaged 9.1 points per game during the team's playoff run to the 1981 NBA championship. A notable moment in his career took place on Oct. 12, 1979, when he sank the first 3-point basket in NBA history. He scored 7,314 points as a pro, averaging 9.2 per game.

He ended his playing career following the 1981-82 season, but stayed on with the Celtics as an assistant coach before becoming head man in 1990-91. He led the team to playoff berths in four of his five seasons at the helm. He later served as head coach of the Milwaukee Bucks, Los Angeles Clippers and Philadelphia 76ers.



## **TOM HEATH**

### **Christian Brothers Academy Cross Country & Track Coach**

Simply put, Tom Heath is one of the most successful coaches in the history of New Jersey high school sports.

A 1965 graduate of the Lincroft school, he returned to his alma mater in 1970 to teach math. That year, he took on the assistant coaching role with the cross country team. He became head coach of cross country and track the following year at age 23.

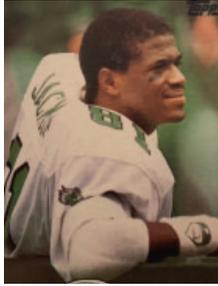
He remained the cross country coach and track coach for a total of 45 years, where his teams won 21 NJSIAA Meet of Champions crowns, 26 Group state championships, a national championship, three Penn Relays DMR titles and 15 Eastern States cross country championships.

And then there was "The Streak." His Colts were beaten in a dual meet by Raritan on Oct. 20, 1973, and amazingly never lost another during his tenure. The streak reached a national record total of 343 consecutive dual meet wins at the time of his retirement following the 2015 season.

His 45-year career totaled 135 running seasons. Following his coaching retirement, he taught for four additional years. Generations of CBA students learned from Heath in classes such as pre-calculus, geometry, algebra, finite math and college algebra.

His legacy at the school continues through things such as the annual Tom Heath Freshman Run, a 1.3 mile race around the campus at the start of the school year, something every freshman has participated in since the founding of the school in 1959.

"It's not every day that a school says goodbye to its longest tenured faculty member, much less someone who has taught there for much of the institution's entire existence," said CBA principal Ross Fales at the time of Heath's teaching retirement in 2019. "For half a century, Tom Heath has impacted students and athletes at CBA. He is, in a sense, a living legend and a name that will likely be forever remembered at CBA."



## **KENNY JACKSON** **South River HS** **Athlete - Football**

When it comes to high school athletic achievements, few can match what Kenny Jackson accomplished during his career at South River.

But to make it even better, he continued to achieve stardom as an All-American football player at Penn State and eight-year pro in the NFL.

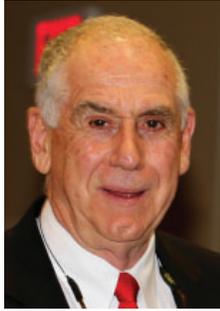
A 1980 graduate at South River, he was named All-State in football, basketball and track. He also received a letter in baseball.

He scored 1,078 points in basketball, and won the 400 meter run at the 1980 outdoor Meet of Champions. He was an all-around standout in football, and quarterbacked the team as a senior. The school later retired his No. 21 jersey.

He played wide receiver at Penn State, and was school's first All-American wideout, an honor he achieved twice. He had 109 career catches totaling 2,006 yards and 25 touchdowns. His best year was as a junior in 1982, when he had 41 catches for 697 yards and seven TDs for a Penn State team that won the national championship. He set more than two dozen school receiving records while playing for the Nittany Lions. The team was also 4-0 in bowl games during his career, including the win over Georgia in the Sugar Bowl that resulted in the 1982 national title.

He was selected by the Philadelphia Eagles in the first round (fourth overall) in the 1984 NFL draft. He played with the Eagles through 1988, spent the 1989 season with the Houston Oilers, and then rejoined the Eagles for the 1990 and '91 campaigns. He had 126 catches totaling 2,170 yards and 11 TDs during his pro career.

He later went into coaching, including eight years working with the receivers at Penn State and three seasons on the staff with the Pittsburgh Steelers.



**THOMAS LOPES**  
**IAABO**  
**Contributor/Official**

While New Jersey has a well-deserved reputation for producing some of the greatest athletes in sports history, the state also has a less recognized distinction - many of the top game officials spread throughout all of the major college and professional ranks also hail from the Garden State.

One of the most notable is Tom Lopes, who rose from working as a high school basketball referee in Central Jersey to becoming a regular in the NCAA men's basketball tournament, including his officiating at three Final Fours. He was later bestowed with the top honor given to any sports official in the United States.

While not working as an official, he served 39 years as a teacher, guidance counselor, assistant principal and principal with the Keansburg School District, culminating with his time as superintendent in 1995-1996.

During his time as a high school ref, he was annually assigned to some of the most important matchups, including Shore Conference and NJSIAA championship games.

He joined the college ranks in 1972, and became a Division 1 referee five years into a career that would ultimately span 40 years and include 20 consecutive NCAA tournaments, highlighted by the three Final Four assignments. He was named Naismith College Official of the Year in 1997.

Lopes also spent a dozen years as Executive Director of the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials, and has been a member of the organization for over 50 years. Among his other duties was service on the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee as a consultant.

The highlight of his career came in 2019, when he received the highest honor in American sports officiating, the Gold Whistle, from the National Association of Sports Officials. He was selected not only for his work on the court, but also for his decades of work in training and mentoring younger officials.

"I was shocked when I found out about the Gold Whistle award," he said at the time of the announcement. "I never thought I would be considered for it. My background as an educator helped me both on and off the floor. Hopefully I've made a difference in the training of officials."



## **EULACE PEACOCK\***

### **Union HS**

### **Athlete - Track and Field**

Eulace Peacock may be one of the best New Jersey athletes that you've never heard of. While at Union HS, he set one of the state's most impressive records in track and field, and a number of world records followed. And if not for an ill-timed injury, he could very well have gained a lasting place in American sports history.

Born on Aug. 27, 1914 in Alabama, he was raised in Union, where he graduated from the high school in 1933. He excelled at track, particularly in sprints, from an early age. During his senior year, he set a state record in the long jump (24 feet, 4.25 inches) that remained on the books for an incredible 44 years until it was broken in 1977 by superstar Renaldo Nehemiah of Scotch Plains-Fanwood.

From the time he was in high school, Peacock forged a friendly, competitive rivalry with an Ohio sprinter named Jesse Owens. At one meet, Peacock set a high school long jump record that was broken by Owens two hours later. They ran against each frequently in college, with Peacock competing for Temple and Owens for Ohio State. More often than not, Eulace was the winner in both the sprints and long jump. In fact, during the 1935 season, Peacock set world records in the indoor 60 yard dash, 100 meter dash and long jump. At one point, he defeated Owens - who was a year older - in five straight races. "It's going to take a special man to beat Peacock," Owens said in 1935. "I've already reached my peak. Peacock is just now reaching his. He's a real athlete. I don't know whether I can defeat him again."

Unfortunately, an injury changed everything. A month after Owens made that remark, Peacock popped a hamstring later that summer while running with the U.S. National Team in Italy. The injury sidelined him for several months, and flared up numerous times afterward, most notably at the Penn Relays the following spring, so that he was unable to compete at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany. With his rival back home in America, Owens put forth his history-making display of four Gold Medal victories, including the 100 meters and long jump, that made him an American hero for the accomplishment and for simultaneously embarrassing Adolf Hitler and his racist policies on his home turf.

Peacock recovered and remain active in track, although the Olympics were cancelled in 1940 and '44 due to World War II. During the war, he also served in the Coast Guard, where he was a successful track coach. He also became a noted track official. He died in at age 82 in 1996. Through the years, he maintained his friendship with Owens, and the two even formed a wholesale meat packing business together.

Peacock's name lives on in Union, which each year presents the Eulace Peacock Unsung Hero Award, which recognizes those in the town who humbly, diligently and passionately seek change and progression within the community without looking for credit or recognition.

*\*Posthumous Award.*



**HARDING WILLIAM "PETE" PETERSON\***  
**Woodbridge HS**  
**Athlete - Baseball**

Harding Peterson was a true success story, first from his days at Woodbridge High School, then at Rutgers University, and next as a Major League Baseball player, coach and executive. Born Oct. 17, 1929 in Perth Amboy, he was a three-sport star at Woodbridge, where he graduated in 1946. He earned three letters as a three-year starter at guard and linebacker in football and earned three more letters as a three-year starter in basketball. Baseball was his best sport, where he was awarded four more letters as a four-year starter at catcher. He was also named First Team All-State.

He then starred as a catcher at Rutgers, and helped the Scarlet Knights to a third-place finish at the 1950 College World Series. That season, he was also named a Second Team All-America, becoming the first-ever Rutgers baseball player to achieve a national honor.

Following that season, he signed with the Pittsburgh Pirates, which was the start of a 35-year run with the organization. He started off with two years in the minors, and then had his career interrupted due to a two-year stint with the Army during the Korean War. He was called up to the big leagues early in the 1955 season. Later that year, he broke a bone in his arm following a collision at home plate. The injury was slow to heal, causing him to miss the 1956 season as well. But during that absence, he began to do front office work for the team, something that would prove extremely beneficial moving forward. He returned to the Pirates in 1957, where as a visiting player he had the distinction of playing in the final Giants game at the Polo Grounds and final Dodgers game at Ebbets Field before both teams moved to California during the off-season.

As a 29-year old in 1959, he served as a player-manager for a Pirates minor league team, and then briefly appeared with the Pirates at the end of the season to close out his big league playing career. He continued to manage various minor league teams for the Pirates, until taking a job as the team's farm director and director of scouting following the 1967 season. In that role, he helped the Pirates draft and develop players who helped the team to the top of the National League East for most of the next dozen years. He would eventually become General Manager, and was running the team when the Pirates captured the 1979 World Series. He left the Pirates in 1985, and later became GM of the New York Yankees. He closed out his career as scout for the Toronto Blue Jays and San Diego Padres.

He retired in 1995, and passed away at age 89 on April 16, 2019. Peterson was a charter inductee in the Woodbridge Township Athletics Alumni Hall of Fame, and the baseball field at the high school has been named in his honor.

*\*Posthumous Award.*



**TRICIA POPOWSKI**  
**Hoffman HS**  
**Athlete - Softball**

There's never been an athlete in New Jersey quite like Tricia Popowski. And in an age where most elite athletes specialize in their best sport, there may never be another like her again.

A 1987 graduate of Hoffman (now South Amboy) High School, she was awarded 12 varsity letters - four apiece in soccer, basketball and softball.

Her main sports were basketball and softball. On the hardwood, she scored 1,111 points for teams that went 114-5 during her career. At one point along the way, Hoffman was ranked No. 1 in the nation by USA Today. It won three Group 1 state titles with Popowski in the lineup, and she was also an All-State First Team selection.

She was even better in softball, and in fact put up some of the best hitting stats - by far - in state history. Her career numbers included 38 home runs, 39 triples, 37 doubles, 211 hits, 237 runs scored, 236 RBI and a .603 batting average. As a junior in 1986, she had an incredible 80 RBI and hit 13 home runs for the Group 1 state champs. In 1987, she hit .703. She was a four-time All-Group 1 player and two-time First Team All-State selection.

She continued to post astonishing hitting statistics during her four years playing at University of South Carolina, where she set a slew of records, including both season and career records in the following categories: games played, doubles, triples, home runs, runs and walks. She also set career records for RBI, hit by pitch and stolen bases. Popowski totaled 279 hits with the Gamecocks, including a NCAA-record 51 triples. She also struck out once in every 23.7 at-bats. She was later inducted into the school Athletic Hall of Fame.

She continued to play post-college, including three years with the famed Raybestos Brakettes, who won the 1992 ASA Women's Major Fast Pitch National Championship with Popowski in the lineup. In one game during that tournament, she set an ASA record for that event with five hits in one game. She also played three years with the U.S. National Team, winning several championships along the way.

In 1991, Power Flight, a worldwide bat manufacturer, produced and marketed two signature softball bats, the Tricia Popowski model, and the Scooter Popowski model, which used her nickname.

She remains active as a coach on the local club scene, and is a middle school teacher in Point Pleasant.



**TONY SIRAGUSA**  
**David Brearley Regional HS**  
**Athlete - Football**

Tony Siragusa has always been about creating opportunities, and making the most of them.

Born Oct. 14, 1967, the Kenilworth native grew up attending David Brearley High in his hometown. At 6-3 and close to 250 pounds, he starred for the football team as a lineman, and was also the team's kicker. He was an All-State First Team selection as a senior in the fall of 1984.

During the winter, he continued a family tradition of wrestling for the school. He was sensational in that sport, going 97-1 for his career and winning the state heavyweight championship as a senior.

His next stop was to play football at University of Pittsburgh. He started at defensive tackle as a sophomore and junior, and was beginning to be touted as a potential NFL first-round draft pick when he tore the ACL in his left knee, forcing him to sit the following season. He wound up going undrafted in 1990.

He was signed as a free agent by the Indianapolis Colts, and became an immediate contributor on the defensive line. He remained with the Colts through the 1996 season, and then signed with the Baltimore Ravens. He starred there as well, most notably as part of the 2000 team that set an NFL record for fewest points in a 16-game season and also defeated the Giants in the Super Bowl. He retired following the 2001 season.

Having established a level of marketability for his outgoing personality, Siragusa joined the cast of "The Sopranos," playing the role of Frankie Cortese, and also worked 12 years as a sideline reporter on Fox NFL broadcasts. He's also remained active in the community, by donating funds to renovate the Brearley wrestling room and also creating the Tony Siragusa Foundation, which awarded grants to activities such as autism research, Make A Wish and Grant A Wish.



**JOHN SOMOGYI**  
**St. Peter's HS**  
**Athlete - Basketball**

When John Somogyi played basketball for St. Peter's (New Brunswick) during the late 1960's, games weren't just games. They were more like events.

Basketball followers from throughout the state crowded gyms to watch Somogyi play, and for good reason. By the time he graduated in 1968 after leading his team to that year's Parochial B state championship, he scored a state-record 3,310 points, an average of 33.4 per game. And blessed with plenty of shooting range, he posted those numbers two decades before the advent of the 3-point shot in high school basketball. He was a two-time All-State First Team selection and a Parade Magazine All-American as a senior. Somogyi was also adept at getting to the foul line, and set national records for free throws made in both a single season and career.

Somogyi started his college career at New Mexico, where he averaged 11.3 points in his first season as a sophomore (freshmen were still ineligible at that time). He transferred back home to play at Rutgers, where he averaged 23.5 points as a junior and 20 points as a senior. His college point totals were 1,109 at Rutgers and 1,301 overall.

He stayed involved as a high school coach, compiling a 275-111 over 15 years at Madison Central, St. Peter's (N.B.), St. Joseph's (Metuchen) and McCorristin.

His scoring record was famously broken by his daughter, Kristen, who scored 3,899 points, also at St. Peter's, before graduating in 1992. Kristen was inducted into the NJSIAA Hall of Fame in 2018. John's boys state scoring record held until Dajuan Wagner graduated from Camden with 3,462 points in 2001. Wagner is also being inducted into the NJSIAA Hall of Fame today.



**STEVEN J. TIMKO**  
**NJSIAA**  
**Contributor/Administrator**

Steven Timko capped a long career in high school sports by serving as Executive Director of the NJSIAA from 2006 until his retirement in 2018.

Prior to his time as the leader of the association, he worked from 2001-06 as Assistant Director, where he had administration responsibilities for boys soccer, boys and girls volleyball, ice hockey, fencing, wrestling, gymnastics and baseball, as well as corporate sponsorships.

Before joining the NJSIAA, he spent 25 years as director of health, physical education and athletics with the Hopewell Valley Regional School District.

A native of South Plainfield, he graduated from Western Kentucky University in 1967. He then worked as a teacher in Louisville, KY before returning home to teach and coach at South Plainfield in 1973. He moved to Hopewell Valley in 1976.

His accomplishments were many at NJSIAA. He took over during a difficult time, when some state legislators were threatening the organization's very existence. Not only did he stabilize that situation, he helped develop programs such as steroid testing, conference and sectional realignment, hydration and weight management programs for wrestling, and the implementation of Janet's Law, which requires all public and private schools in the state have an automated external defibrillator on site. A number of lives have been saved at high school sports events as a result.

Additionally, he helped increase funding for the NJSIAA Scholar-Athlete program from \$58,000 to \$220,000 per year, increased the work of the Medical Advisory Committee, required all coaches to take a Principles of Coaching course, required all coaches to be recertified every two years in CPR and AED, and all coaches and officials to take a NFHS concussion course. He served on the NFHS Board of Directors and its Medical Advisory Committee.

"I have had the pleasure of knowing Steve Timko for virtually my entire life," said New Jersey State Senator Patrick J. Deignan upon Timko's retirement. "He is the definition of a true gentleman. He treats everyone with respect. The biggest compliment that I can give Steve is that he is a problem solver. As Executive Director of the NJSIAA, he deals with issues that can literally affect the lives of hundreds of athletes throughout New Jersey. Before he comes to a decision, he considers the positions of all involved and always does what he believes is right, not only for the student but for all of the schools in the state. Simply stated, we are fortunate to have Steve Timko on our side."



## **ANDRE TIPPETT**

### **Barringer HS**

### **Athlete - Football**

Andre Tippett's journey has been an amazing one.

It started it on Dec. 27, 1959, when he was born in Birmingham, Alabama. His family moved to New Jersey when he was seven, where he overcame bullying as a youngster to become a football star at Barringer High School Newark. His travels then took him to University of Iowa, where he became an All-America linebacker. Next stop was Massachusetts, where he spent 11 years with the New England Patriots and became one of the most decorated players in team history. There were other trips as well, like the summer weekend in Canton, Ohio, in 2008, when he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. All in all, not bad for a player who never played football until reaching high school and was cut from the JV team after tryouts as a freshman.

During his final three seasons at Barringer, Tippett got better and better. He led Barringer to an appearance against Westfield in the 1977 NJSIAA North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 final, a game that was played before 33,000 fans at Giants Stadium. Westfield won the game, but Tippett ended the season as an All-State selection.

He spent his first year of college at Ellsworth Community College in Iowa, and then transferred to Iowa. He was an All-Big Ten selection as junior and senior, and First Team All-America as a senior in 1981, concluding his career in a Rose Bowl appearance against Washington. He was later inducted into the Iowa Athletic Hall of Fame.

He was selected by the Patriots in the second round of the 1982 NFL Draft, and wound up spending his entire career with the team. At one point, he was selected to the Pro Bowl in five consecutive seasons. In 1984, he had 18.5 sacks (third most in NFL history) and in 1985, he added 16.5 sacks (sixth most in NFL history). No linebacker has recorded more sacks in back-to-back years. He ended his career with 100 sacks in 151 games, an average of 0.662 per game, which ranks fourth all-time among linebackers. Tippett was named to the NFL All-Decade team for the 1980s, and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2008, where among his guests was his high school coach, Frank Verducci.

In 2019, Essex County dedicated a football/soccer field located within Branch Brook Park in Newark in his name.

A contributing factor to his success was his experience in martial arts, which he has been involved with since age 12. He currently holds a seventh degree black belt. He has also remained with the Patriots since retiring, and has served since 2007 as the team's Executive Director of Community Affairs.



**DAJUAN WAGNER**  
**Camden HS**  
**Athlete - Basketball**

There have been hundreds of thousands of boys basketball players in New Jersey since the first state champion was crowned over a century ago. None of them scored more points than Dajuan Wagner.

The 6-3 guard graduated from Camden in 2001 after totaling a state-record 3,462 points. He also led his team to the Group 3 state championship and Tournament of Champions title as a junior - making Camden the last public school to win the event.

Wagner, as the son of Camden legend Milt Wagner, was known before he even reached high school, and was under a microscope from the moment he scored 12 points in his first game as a freshman in December, 1997. He went on to score 737 that year (a 27.3 average), and earned the first of his unprecedented four All-South Jersey honors.

For the next three years, the points, and more importantly, Camden victories kept coming. During his senior year, he scored at least 50 in five games and averaged 42.5 for the season. He even scored 25 in the McDonald's All-American Game that spring.

His points came from all over the court. He had 3-point range, but could also drive to the basket and get to the foul line. If there was one play that showed how special he was, it came in the semifinals of the 2000 Tournament of Champions at Fairleigh Dickinson University, when he quickly drove end-to-end and scored at the buzzer to give Camden a 62-60 victory over St. Patrick.

After Camden, he signed with University of Memphis. As a freshman, he scored 762 points and averaged 21.2 points for a team that won the NIT. He scored 32 in a semifinal win over Temple and 16 points in a championship victory over South Carolina to earn the tournament MVP award.

After that, he entered the 2002 NBA Draft, and was chosen in the first round with the sixth overall pick by the Cleveland Cavaliers. He averaged 13.4 points as a rookie, but was soon hit with health issues which ultimately ended his career at the start of the 2006-07 season.

He is still active on the local scene, where the Wagner tradition lives on as his son, D.J., currently plays for Camden and is considered one of the top prospects in the country.



## **NANCY WELCH WILLIAMS** **Shore Regional HS** **Field Hockey Coach**

Few coaches in New Jersey history have had as much success coaching a variety of sports than Nancy Williams. And along the way, she made sure to fight for equal opportunities for female athletes.

A 1966 graduate of Shore Regional in West Long Branch, she joined the faculty there four years later upon her graduation from Trenton State College. She then taught physical education and driver's education for more than 40 years.

When she attended Shore during the first half of the 1960s, there weren't competitive sports opportunities for girls, so she was a cheerleader. At Trenton State, she was able to participate in field hockey, gymnastics and softball.

Starting as a teacher and coach at Shore with the 1970-71 school year, during her time there she served at various points as a coach in basketball, softball, track and swimming in addition to field hockey, where she led the Blue Devils for 44 years from the founding of the program in 1970 through 2013.

In her time leading the team, the Blue Devils went 839-67-55, making her the winningest field hockey coach in United States history. Her final 43 teams won Shore Conference divisional championships, and her teams also won 19 Shore Conference Tournament championships (ending with a string of 15 straight) and 13 NJSIAA state championships.

Williams won 530 games and a state title over 31 years in softball, added 205 more victories and two Shore Conference championships over 13 seasons in basketball and a state title in her four years leading the track team.

The results added up to almost 1,600 total victories at the school. But she was more than about winning games.

As the number of girls participating in high school sports exploded nationally during the 1970s, Shore Regional saw its interest in girls athletics rise as well. And all the while, Williams was a constant crusader for equality in attention, support and funding. Her constant advocating made sure female athletes were treated as well as the boys, at Shore and elsewhere.

Although she may now be retired, her legacy is still felt around Shore Regional. Among other things, the field hockey alumni created a scholarship fund in her honor, and the team competes on Nancy Williams Field.



**DON WIEDER\***  
**East Brunswick HS**  
**Gymnastics Coach**

When it came to boys gymnastics success in New Jersey, no school dominated like East Brunswick. The architect of the program was head coach Don Wieder.

He led the team from inception as a varsity program from 1963 through the 1991 season. His career record was 252-33-2, with his team going undefeated in dual meets in 16 different seasons. From 1977 through 1980, the Bears went a combined 42-0. After a 9-1 season in 1981 and 8-1 finish in '82, East Brunswick went on another streak, going 60-0 from 1983 through '88. His teams also won 16 NJSIAA state championships, including six straight between 1969 and '74 and five consecutive from 1976 through '80. Additionally, 66 of his gymnasts won NJSIAA individual championships.

A total of 20 East Brunswick gymnastics earned college scholarships during his tenure. Four attended service academies.

He was a graduate of Pen Argyl High School in Pennsylvania, and East Stroudsburg State College, where he was a member of the gymnastics team. After college, he moved to East Brunswick and joined the district as a physical education teacher in 1963. As a teacher who worked throughout the district, he was able to introduce young students to the sport. And during his time at the school, he also operated Wieder's Gym Club for 14 years.

In addition to his gymnastics leadership, he also spent time as an assistant coach in football. When East Brunswick instituted an Athletic Hall of Fame in 2013, Wieder was a charter inductee.

He passed away on Nov. 6, 2020 at age 81.

*\*Posthumous Award.*



## **43rd Annual Award of Honor 2022 Award of Honor Recipients**

### **CARL RICKERSHAUSER & ED COLONA**

It's hard to imagine a NJSIAA state-level Cross-Country or Track and Field championship event minus the presence of Ed Colona and Carl Rickershauser. And even more so, it's hard to picture one without being in the presence of the other.

Both have been on the running scene for decades. In recent years, Ed has served as Meet Director for the Cross Country and Indoor and Outdoor Track and Field Championships, with Carl working as the State Rules Interpreter for all three offerings since 2001.

Ed, who was born and raised in Toms River, has always been involved in athletics. A 1967 graduate of Toms River High School (then the only high school in town, now Toms River South), he competed in soccer and track. After a year in college, he joined the U.S. Army and trained at Fort Dix and Fort Holabird, the Army Intelligence School. He was assigned to the 525th MI Unit in Vietnam, completed his enlistment, and returned to college.

He earned his Bachelor of Arts from Glassboro State and was hired as a teacher of the handicapped within the Burlington County Special Services School District. He would spend the next 35 years with the BCSS. During that time, Ed earned his Masters of Education in Pupil Personnel Services and coached high school wrestling. He also received his principal's certification. After leaving the classroom, he held several administrative positions, the longest being principal of the high school.

In addition to his work at Special Services, he coached JV soccer at Rancocas Valley for seven years. While at RV, Ed worked with track coach Ray Hoagland, who encouraged him to become a track official, which he did in 1983. He met another important figure at Rancocas Valley in Don Danser, a long-time meet director and future NJSIAA Assistant Director. With Don's guidance, Ed gained an appreciation for both Cross Country and Track and Field. And with his additional support and encouragement, Ed became a Meet Director. He's been a long-time director for Burlington County, South Jersey Track Coaches Association and Olympic Conference meets, as well as state sectionals. Upon Don Danser's sudden passing in June of 2015, Ed became State Meet Director for all three seasons.

Ed and his wife Bettie, who also became a track official, are parents of four children.

Carl Rickershauser graduated from Union High School in 1954, where he lettered in Cross Country and Indoor and Outdoor Track and Field. He lettered in the same sports at Montclair State Teachers College, where he graduated in 1958.

He worked as an educator, teaching social studies and serving as guidance director, at Edgewood High School from 1958 through '74.

From 1958 through 1966, he was head coach of Cross Country and Indoor and Outdoor Track teams at Edgewood. His teams totaled 17 championships, including Penn Relays, Olympic Conference, Camden County, South Jersey Group 2 and NJSIAA Outdoor Group 2 victories.

From 1974 through '98, he moved over to Collingswood, where he served a variety of posts, including six years as athletic director, as well as vice principal, principal and assistant superintendent.

From 1989 through 2012, Carl served in the capacity of Educational Administrator Mentor for the NJDOE/NJPSA/FEA. In that role, he mentored more than 65 elementary, middle school and high school athletic directors, vice principals, principals and district curriculum directors.

His track officiating career began in 1966, and over the years, he took on additional roles both assigning and interpreting rules. He's been a New Jersey Track and Field Officials State Executive Board Member since 1977, member of the NJSIAA Cross Country, Indoor and Outdoor Track committees since 1999 in addition to being NJSIAA Cross Country and Track and Field Rules Interpreter since 2001. Carl has also represented the NJSIAA at annual NFHS rules interpretation meetings. He's also served on numerous NJSIAA committees, including the Executive Committee, and received many honors for his coaching and officiating work.

Carl's wife, Eileen, passed away in 2012. Together they raised eight children.

***What Carl says about Ed:***

"He has taken the legacy that Don Danser had passed on, and expanded on it to the point that where we are now that we have one of the best programs in the nation. He's maintained that legacy, and expanded on it. We've had a lot of fun, and a good time. There's a lot of work involved, but that's what it's all about. We're both educators and we were both principals, and to us, we're here for the kids, and we're doing something within the scope of our careers."

***What Ed says about Carl:***

"We've worked together around 40 years, and talk almost every day, and we're also sitting next to each other at meets. It's basically a year round thing. Our personalities match and we're pretty easy to get along with. We have a lot of experience, and that leads to a lot of relaxation in making decisions. Carl is consistent. He has a great wealth of information and knowledge, and he's consistent with it. He's great to work with."

## 2022 Special Award Recipients

### **Jeff Koehler, Coach, Tenafly HS NFCA Northeast Sectional Volleyball Coach of the Year**

- Girls volleyball coach at Tenafly since 1998. Also serves as head coach of the boys basketball and softball teams. Formerly served as head coach of the girls basketball team.
  - Has won 430 games as a volleyball coach.
  - His volleyball teams have finished .500 or better every year since 2001. Has had only one losing season during his tenure.
  - 2021 team captured a NJSIAA Group 3 Sectional Championship. Was Group 2 state runner-up in 2009 and sectional finalist in 2014, '15 and '16.
  - 2021 All-Sports Coach of the Year winner, northjersey.com.
  - 2021 Girls Volleyball State Coach of the Year, nj.com.
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### **Tom Fisher, Athletic Director, Phillipsburg HS NJSIAA Service Award**

- Athletic Director at Phillipsburg since 1996. Certified Athletic Administrator, National Interscholastic Athletic Administrator Association.
  - Head boys basketball coach at Phillipsburg from 1976-2002, won 344 games, including 1983 NJSIAA Group 3 state title. Also won three sectional championships and four Hunterdon/Warren Tournament titles. Four-time Easton Express Times Coach of the Year.
  - Head boys cross country coach from 1974-1983, with 124 dual wins, including a 36 meet win streak and a sectional championship.
  - Head boys golf coach, 1986-88.
  - Taught English at Easton Area High School (1973-1974) and at Phillipsburg (1974-1996).
  - NJSIAA Executive Committee member, 1997-2000.
  - During his time at Phillipsburg, has offered the school as a site for NJSIAA state finals in both boys and girls wrestling, wrestling districts and sectionals, and boys basketball Group semifinals.
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**Lydia Siipola, Golf Tournament Sectional Director  
NJSIAA Service Award**

- 1982 graduate of Delaware Valley HS, and East Stroudsburg University in 1987. Taught physics at Delaware Valley for 10 years and was the school's Teacher of the Year in 1995.
  - Has been instrumental in the growth of girls golf over the past 20 years, serving on the state golf committee and helping to expand the girls sectional and state team championships.
  - With the support of athletic director Bob Rossi, began coaching the inaugural girls golf team at Hunterdon Central in 2003.
  - In her seven years as coach, Hunterdon Central improved each season and won the NJSIAA Tournament of Champions in 2009 and '10. Led team to undefeated records three times over four years, with a 44-match win streak. Named state Coach of the Year in 2009, as well as NFCA Northeast Sectional Girls Golf Coach of the Year.
  - Founded and directed Central Jersey-based "Girls Go Golfing" series in 2008.
  - Director of the NJSIAA North Sectional Tournament since its inception in 2008, while serving on NJSIAA Golf Committee during the same span.
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**John Siipola, Golf Tournament Sectional Director  
NJSIAA Service Award**

- Graduate of Hunterdon Central and Middlebury College. Competed on golf team at both.
- Taught math for 33 years at Delaware Valley, where he served as department chairman as well as Gifted and Talented course developer for 20 years. Was also the school's tech coordinator and was honored as 1996 Teacher of the Year in Hunterdon County.
- Aided his wife, Lydia, in establishing the golf program at Hunterdon Central and in her quest to promote girls golf throughout the state, offering opportunities in the sport to all young women, regardless of ability.
- With Lydia's retirement due to illness in 2010, he helped her maintain her "Girls Go Golfing" series. This concept allowed girls from throughout Central Jersey to learn the game at six area courses twice a week.
- Along with his wife, compiled the complete NJSIAA girls golf history of individual, team, sectional and Tournament of Champions results.