

Coaches honored at NJSCA Hall of Fame event



A crowd of nearly 300 gathered at Pines Manor in Edison on Sunday for the 27th annual New Jersey Scholastic Coaches Association Hall of Fame awards event, which was held in cooperation with the NJSIAA.

A total of 48 coaches were honored, including the 20 who were inducted into the NJSCA Hall of Fame. The others were presented National Federation coaching awards.

The Coaches Hall of Fame has a long history. Its roots date to 1961, when the New Jersey Interscholastic Coaches Association honored all football coaches with undefeated seasons.

In 1964, the NJICA honored coaches from all sports, past or present, who had been nominated from their county by their peers.

Then, in 1983, the honor award program was renamed as the NJICA "Hall of Fame" and included all past honorees.

In 1995, the New Jersey Scholastic Coaches Association assumed sponsorship of the Hall of Fame, for all head varsity coaches in the public and non-public NJSIAA member schools.

The following individuals comprised this year's class, which brings the all-time number of honorees to 1,852:

Chris Caserta, Ramsey HS
Shaun Cherewich, Westfield HS
Marvin Fenstermacher*, Somerville HS
Joe Freeman*, Westfield HS
John "Doc" Gantz*, Irvington HS
Vicky Gillen, Toms River North HS
Tony Giordano, Asbury Park HS
Frank Guadagnino, Fair Lawn HS
Joe Haemmerle, Bergen Catholic HS
Kevin Harper, Middlesex HS
William Hartney, New Milford HS
Mike Kearney, Donovan Catholic HS
Bruce Keogh, Wayne Hills HS
Christopher Levin, Bridgewater-Raritan HS
Chet Parlavecchio, Passaic Valley HS / Bloomfield HS
Tony Picaro, Linden HS
Nancy Saggio, Union Catholic Regional HS
Dr. Eric Schwartz, Washington Twp. HS
Chris Sheppard, Williamstown HS
Mike Suk, Randolph HS

*Posthumous award



Also honored were those receiving National Federation Coach of the Year Awards. That group included four who received sectional honors (New Jersey, New York and the New England states) as well as New Jersey honorees from each sport.

SECTIONAL COACHES OF THE YEAR

Kevin Carty, Jr., Hillsborough HS, Football
Chris Gacos, Hunterdon Central Regional HS, Boys Golf
Mary Klinger, Rutgers Prep, Girls Basketball
Scott Pressman, Manalapan HS, Boys Wrestling

NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR

Mary Klinger, Rutgers Prep, Girls Basketball

STATE COACHES OF THE YEAR

Martin Booker, Willingboro HS, Boys Track & Field
Dan Chung, Paul VI HS, Girls Volleyball
Phil Colicchio, Elizabeth HS, Boys Basketball
Michael Criscitello, Governor Livingston HS, Ice Hockey
Megan Decker, Mount St. Mary, Girls Swimming/Diving
David Donohue, Haddon Township HS, Boys Cross Country
Allie Ferrara, Morristown HS, Girls Lacrosse
Sarah Fitzgerald, Shawnee HS, Girls Tennis
Kelly Forthun, South Brunswick HS, Boys Bowling
Laura Hartnett, Chatham HS, Boys Swimming/Diving
Kelli Holleran, Metuchen HS, Girls Cross Country
Brock Hor, Scotch Plains-Fanwood HS, Boys Volleyball
James Howard, Wardlaw Hartridge School, Girls Golf
Eric Johnson, Howell HS, Baseball
Jeffrey Koegel, Scotch Plains-Fanwood HS, Girls Track & Field
Sue McHale, Union Catholic HS, Gymnastics
Nick Miceli, Scotch Plains-Fanwood HS, Boys Lacrosse
Toni Popinko, Phillipsburg HS, Field Hockey
Michelle Schlichtig-Hastings, Haddon Heights HS, Softball
Kathleen Sinram, Wayne Valley HS, Girls Soccer
Ben Stuart, Summit HS, Boys Soccer
Dave Thompson, Brick Memorial HS, Girls Bowling
Marion Weber, Pingry School, Boys Tennis
Joseph Zanko III, Montgomery HS, Fencing

The NJSCA Hall of Fame is a prestigious honor, since the coaches are selected by a committee comprised of other coaches.

One of those selected this year was Chet Parlavacchio, a Seton Hall Prep and Penn State graduate who played in the NFL. He coached a total of 24 years at Irvington, Bloomfield, Elizabeth and Passaic Valley, with a five-year stint on the staff of



the Tennessee Titans in the NFL mixed in. He was especially known as a coach who turned struggling programs into successful ones.

While he's received many coaching awards over the years, NJSCA Hall of Fame honor is extra-special. He was joined at the event by a number of those he coached, who have gone on to become coaches and leaders themselves.

"It's an unbelievable thing," he said of the NJSCA recognition. "It allows you to walk away. It's funny, the metamorphosis of being a coach. When you are a young kid and first come on the scene, all you care about is winning and losing. And then somewhere there, you're sitting at the end, and you look at people who've played for you, and you look at the men they've become after playing in your program, and it just glimmers in your heart. In the end, the winning and losing fades, but that lasts forever."

The NJSCA has also added a category in recent years for posthumous honorees. Among those recognized was John "Doc" Ganz, who coached Irvington baseball for 25 years beginning in 1918. His teams won six sectional championships (in the days where that was the highest honor), five Greater Newark Tournament championships (when that was a statewide event) and three runner-up finishes in the GNT. The gym at Irvington is named in his honor.

Gantz was nominated for the NJSCA Hall of Fame by Dr. John Taylor, the Irvington athletic director, with research help from the school's very active alumni group.

“If you go into Irvington High School, we have maybe 12 trophy cases, and we still have all of the trophies from his era. When I first took over as the AD in 2017, I gave myself a history lesson to find out who he was. With the help of the Irvington Varsity Club, which is made up of old athletes and coaches, they gave me all the stats on him, and we tracked down his records and accomplishments. When the alumni found out that he was going in, it meant a lot to them.”

