

NJSIAA 2026 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

The 28th Annual High School Hall of Fame ceremony gives us the opportunity to honor the following individuals – most deserving of our recognition.



BILL BRUNO **NJSIAA** **Administrator**

Bill Bruno was a man of many things. He was an athlete, teacher, coach, official and administrator over the course of his long career in high school athletics. But most of all, he was respected and beloved.

Born in 1952, he grew up in Asbury Park, where he was exposed to sports from the get-go, since his father, Bill “Butch” Bruno, was the football coach at Asbury Park HS from 1946 through 1965, and is also a member of the NJSIAA Hall of Fame.

Bill himself graduated from Christian Brothers Academy in 1971, before earning a degree from Glassboro State College. He later earned a masters in History from Trenton State College and another in Educational Administration from Georgian Court College. Beginning in 1976, he taught at Manalapan, CBA, Asbury Park and Pinelands high schools. His love for history was evident in his teaching, and he was recognized as Ocean County Teacher of the Year while at Pinelands.

He was also a football and track coach throughout his career. He was awarded Shore Coach of the Year awards in both sports, and he led teams that went undefeated, won league, division and Shore Conference titles. He also coached first-place winners at the Penn Relays while at CBA and Pinelands. He was named State Track Coach of the Year while at CBA in 1983. Bill made the move to administration in 1999, and served as athletic director at Marlboro, Howell, Brick and Brick Memorial. He was an instrumental figure beyond those places during those years through his work with the Shore Conference and with the NJSIAA.

He joined the NJSIAA staff in 2015 as an assistant director. Among his duties, he was in charge of cross country, winter and spring track, along with bowling, gymnastics and wrestling. He also led the New Jersey Scholastic Coaches Association program, including its coaching clinics and Hall of Fame. He was also heavily involved with the introduction of girls wrestling as a sanctioned sport.

He was very involved with national programs, and a frequent presenter throughout the state and beyond. He was a natural due to his overwhelming kindness and warmth. If issues arose where athletic directors felt a need for an outsider to address their athletes over an issue, Bill would gladly help out.

Bill retired from the NJSIAA due to health reasons in June of 2021. He died on June 19, 2021, which coincidentally was the same day as one of his favorite events, the NJSIAA Outdoor Track Meet of Champions. In recognition of all of his contributions to his profession, this year the NJSCA introduced the Bill Bruno Coaching Award, which will be given annually to a person who personifies his positive, passionate and unwavering dedication to New Jersey Interscholastic sports while fostering the development of championship athletes, teams and athletic programs.



JACK CUST, JR.

Immaculata HS

Athlete - Baseball

Of the hundreds of thousands to ever play high school baseball in New Jersey, it's safe to say that no one has bookended their career quite like Jack Cust, Jr. In his first at-bat as a freshman for Immaculata High School in 1994, he hit a grand slam. In his final game for the

Spartans in 1997, he hit two home runs against Bishop Eustace in the Non-Public A state final, including one in his final at-bat.

In between that start and finish, he had a prolific career that resulted in his being among ten players selected to the All-Century baseball team by The Star-Ledger. His prowess at Immaculata also resulted in a first-round selection by the Arizona Diamondbacks in the 1997 Major League Amateur Draft. It made him the 13th New Jersey player to be picked in the first round since the draft was implemented in 1965. He wound up playing ten years as a power-hitting threat in the majors.

It wasn't easy for Cust to produce in big spots in high school, not because of any lack of ability, but because teams would avoid pitching to the slugger if they could. For instance, as a senior, he was walked 48 times, 20 of which were intentional. Nevertheless, he ended that year with 45 hits and a .592 batting average. He also hit 15 home runs that spring, with seven triples, nine doubles and a staggering 1.487 slugging percentage. It's no wonder he was chosen that year's Gatorade New Jersey Player of the Year, as well as a First-Team All-American, which is a rare accomplishment for someone from the Northeast. For his Immaculata career, the two-time All-State selection hit .580, with 31 home runs and 128 RBI.

He worked his way through the Diamondbacks organization before making his major league debut with the team in 2001. He went on to play with Colorado, Baltimore, San Diego, Oakland and Seattle into the 2011 season. He hit 105 home runs among 510 career hits, with 323 RBIs and a .242 batting average. His best years were with Oakland from 2007 through '09, when he hit at least 25 home runs each season, including 33 in 2008. He also drove in at least 70 runs in each of those years, including a career-best 82 in 2007. He later hit a career-high .272 in 2010.

Jack has made a lasting impact on New Jersey baseball in another special way. Along with his father, Jack Sr., they founded the Jack Cust Baseball Academy in 1997, which led to the construction of Diamond Nation, the 65-acre baseball complex in Raritan Township, in 2009. Since its opening, the seven-field, fully-turfed and fully-lit complex plays host to weekly tournaments attracting teams from March through October, regularly featuring teams from Maine to Virginia and other places as well. Tens of thousands of young baseball and softball players have developed their skills by competing at Diamond Nation.

Jack was a winner in another way at Immaculata. He went on to marry his high school sweetheart, Jennifer, and they are parents of two girls, Ava and Sophia.



AUDREY GOMEZ

St. John Vianney HS

Athlete - Basketball

It was the summer of 1987 when people around St. John Vianney began to hear about a player from nearby Keyport who was enrolling as a freshman. No one had seen her compete, but the buzz was that she had potential to be someone special.

That player was Audrey Gomez. Not only was she indeed a special talent, she would turn out to be an all-time great. In fact, by the time she graduated in 1991, her imprint had an effect on New Jersey girls basketball that lasts to this day.

St. John Vianney has been a super power in the state, and for the most part, that ascension began with Gomez, a 5-8 guard who finished her career with 2,231 points, which at the time was second all-time at the Shore and 14th best in state history.

"We've had other great players," her coach, Bill Bulman, would say years later. "But there was only one Audrey."

St. John Vianney won its first Non-Public A championship during her junior year, while finishing runner-up in the Tournament of Champions. She averaged 17 points while earning All-State honors. As a senior, the Lady Lancers went 32-1, repeated as Non-Public A champions, and this time won the TOC for the first time.

Her performances down the stretch were legendary: 42 points in a an overtime win over Notre Dame in the South Jersey final; 35 points, 10 steals, nine rebounds and seven assists in a 21-point triumph over previously-unbeaten St. Peter's (New Brunswick) in the TOC semifinals, followed by 28 points in a lopsided TOC championship win over Ridgewood.

She was recognized with every local, state and metropolitan award possible, and was also a Parade Magazine All-American. She was selected New Jersey's Female Athlete of the Year by the New Jersey Nets. Despite all the accomplishments and accolades that went her way, she was known for her unassuming nature and strong work ethic. In fact, even though she was the star on a championship-winning team as a junior, Bulman considered her the program's most improved player as a senior, a testament to the hours she spent practicing on her driveway in Keyport with her dad, and her younger sister Erica, who became a star herself at St. John Vianney. Years later, both Audrey and Erica were among the 10 players selected to the Star-Ledger All-Century team.

Audrey played collegiately at Notre Dame and USC. She settled in Los Angeles, and was working there when she was tragically murdered in 2001. Her No. 24 jersey is retired at St. John Vianney, where she is remembered fondly to this day, and forever. Her impact as a player, and more importantly a person, was summed up by Bulman after her death.

"She was one of the brightest shining stars that you're ever going to meet in life," he said.



TARA MADIGAN

Northern Highlands Regional HS

Girls Soccer Coach

Tara Madigan holds the distinction of being one of New Jersey's most impactful coaches in any sport this century.

After playing three sports at River Dell, where she was a 100-goal scorer in soccer, and a member of its 1994 Group 2 state championship-winning softball team, the 1997 graduate moved on to a soccer career at Monmouth University. After first serving as an assistant at Tenafly, Tara became girls soccer coach at Northern Highlands High School in Allendale in 2003. She coached Northern Highlands through 2018, and then again from 2021 through 2024.

Her career record was 384-55-12. Competing in one of the most competitive areas in the state, her teams won 11 Bergen County Tournament championships and seven state titles. Her teams also won 14 conference championships and 12 sectional titles. The Highlanders were twice ranked No. 1 in the nation. When her initial stint ended in 2018, Northern Highlands went 22-1 that year and won the Group 3 state championship by not allowing a goal in any of the six tournament games. The team was ranked No. 1 in the state and in the top five nationally.

Northern Highlands truly made history under Madigan beginning in 2011, when the program embarked on a three-year, 65-game winning streak (ended with a tie against Immaculate Heart in the 2013 county final) and 88-game unbeaten streak (stopped by a loss to IHA in the 2014 county final). Both streaks are state records for the sport. Her teams won four straight Group 3 state titles from 2011 to '14, and six in eight years at the time of her first retirement.

"Tara is a once-in-a-lifetime coach," said Bob Williams, the Northern Highlands athletic director who hired Madigan after she began her career as an assistant at Tenafly. "What she did for our soccer program was immeasurable. Beside the accomplishments, and those are amazing, the guidance and support that she provided young female athletes is second to none. To get our young ladies to believe in themselves, and the lessons and leadership she provided is truly amazing."

Tara's approach was summed up by one of her former players at the time of her second retirement. "She pushed us to be our best, like nothing I'd ever experienced before," the player said. "The biggest lessons weren't even about soccer. It was about being a leader, a friend, a better person. She cared about every little thing."

Among other duties, Tara has been director of the Bergen County girls soccer tournament since 2016.

Tara and her wife, Chrissy, have two children - son Jack and daughter Shea.



JANET SMITH-LEET

J.P. Stevens HS

Athlete - Cross Country

How great of an athlete was Janet Marie Smith-Leet?

Quite simply, she was the greatest cross country runner in state history.

A 1984 graduate of J.P. Stevens HS in Edison, she ran her first races in grammar school against boys, wearing a wool cap to hide the fact that she was a girl. In high school, she dealt with issues like exercise-induced asthma, a hamstring issue and a six-inch growth spurt between her sophomore and junior seasons. Yet by the time her high school career was over, she was a four-time Central Jersey sectional champion, the only four-time Group 4 state champion, and the Meet of Champions winner as a freshman, sophomore and senior (and runner-up as a junior).

As a senior, Janet won the MOC with a time of 17:36, setting a Holmdel Park record that stood for 27 years. She continued that season at the Kinney Northeast Regional at Van Cortlandt Park in New York, and won in 17:08, which was the second-fastest time ever on that hallowed course. That result advanced her to the Kinney national championship race in San Diego. After finishing fifth as a sophomore and junior, Janet not only became the only New Jersey girl to ever win the race, she set a meet record by finishing in an incredible 16:43.7, a record that held for seven years. She was later chosen Girls Cross Country Athlete of the Century by The Star-Ledger.

Her dominance extended to the track. She won four Meet of Champions events (the 3,200 in 1982 and '84 and the 1,600 in 1984, as well as the 3,200 indoors in 1982). Her times also included 10:18.6 for two miles and a 4:52.1 for one mile.

Janet continued her career at North Carolina State, where she became a 10-time All-American over the course of her cross country and track career. She was a three-time top-ten finisher at the NCAA Cross Country championship.

She also competed for the United States at the IAAF World Cross Country championship in 1987, and helped the USA defeat the Soviet Union for the team gold medal.

After her running career ended, she founded the SUB5 Running Camp for Girls in Illinois, through which she mentored hundreds of young runners.

Her impact lasted decades, first as a role model through her amazing success, and then as a coach and advisor.

Sadly, Janet passed away on Oct. 12, 2025 at age 59 after waging a brave fight against cancer. She is survived by her husband, Brad, her son Michael and daughter Jennifer.



LISA SWEENEY

Rancocas Valley HS

Athlete - Softball

One of the greatest indicators of an outstanding athlete is when an opponent knows what is coming, yet is powerless to stop it. When that happens in a sport like softball, it's especially impressive.

That's how opposing hitters felt when stepping into the batters box against Rancocas Valley right-hander Lisa Sweeney, especially during her junior and senior seasons in 2004 and 2005, which were the most dominant by a pitcher in state history.

Those two seasons coincided with her mastery of one particular pitch - the riser. Hitters knew it was coming, yet couldn't lay off the pitch. It resulted in her striking out a state-record 424 batters as a junior, followed by another state-record 520 strikeouts as a senior. She concluded her career with a state record 1,263 career strikeouts.

She was first-team All-State both years, and state Player of the Year as a senior in 2005. That season, she went 29-1 with 27 shutouts and 0.15 earned run average. She won all five of her team's state tournament games by shutout, and ended the season with an 85-inning scoreless streak. Her final game was a 2-0 no-hitter over J.P. Stevens in the Group 4 state final, in which she pitched a no-hitter with 18 of the 21 outs by strikeout. Her career record was 79-11 (58-3 over the last two years).

Lisa was also an excellent hitter. She concluded that final season with 44 hits (18 for extra bases) with 30 RBI and a .423 batting average.

Lisa was also much more than a softball player. She earned a total of 11 letters at Rancocas Valley, in five different sports. Aside from four in softball, she was awarded three letters in basketball, two in soccer and one each in tennis and field hockey.

She played softball at Lehigh University, where she was a four-time Patriot League Pitcher of the Year. At the time of her graduation, her name was listed more than 100 times in the conference softball record book. She was also the 2008 Patriot League Player of the Year, and helped the team reach the NCAA tournament three times. Those bids came after Lehigh won the Patriot League championship in 2006, 2008 and 2009. Each time, Lisa was the league tournament MVP.

This year also marks Lisa's 14th as the head coach of the Princeton University softball team. She is a six-time Ivy League Coach of the Year, and her 253 career victories entering the season makes her the second-winningest coach in school history. Her teams have earned four NCAA berths as Ivy League champions.

Lisa and her husband, Brendan, are parents to daughter Jordyn and son Jace.