



Missouri State High School Activities Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seven Missouri Coaches Recognized with 2023-24 NFHS Coach of the Year Honors

COLUMBIA –The Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) is proud to announce that seven Missouri coaches have been recognized as 2023-24 National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Coaches of the Year. These outstanding educators have been honored for their contributions to high school athletics both at the Section 5 level and nationally.

“We are thrilled to see our Missouri coaches being recognized on both the sectional and national levels,” MSHSAA Executive Director Dr. Jennifer Rukstad said. “These honors are a testament to their hard work, dedication and positive influence on the lives of student-athletes.”

The NFHS Coaches Association annually recognizes coaches across the nation for their leadership, service and dedication to their respective sports. Section 5 includes the states of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Minnesota and South Dakota.

Missouri Section 5 Winners

Speech & Debate: Shelia Holt – William Chrisman High School

Shelia Holt, a dedicated Speech & Debate educator with nearly three decades of experience, has made an indelible impact on her students and the broader performing arts community. Throughout her career at Bolivar High School, Nevada High School and William Chrisman High School, Shelia has consistently championed the transformative power of Speech & Debate, guiding countless students to state and national success. A five-time diamond coach and long-standing committee member of both the Heart of America and Ozark Districts of the National Speech & Debate Association, her contributions extend far beyond her classroom. Known for her selfless service, Shelia has been instrumental in organizing major tournaments and transitioning events online during the pandemic to ensure opportunities for all. Her commitment to fostering a supportive environment for educators and students alike exemplifies the highest standards of mentorship and community leadership in the performing arts.

Boys Cross Country: Ryan Layton – Woodland High School

Ryan Layton started the Cross Country program at Woodland High School and has spent 19 years building it into a powerhouse. His boys team claimed the school’s first-ever state championship in 2023, marking a historic achievement for the program. Layton has led his Cross Country teams to multiple conference and district championships and numerous top-four finishes at the state level. He is deeply involved in his community through the Marble Hill Optimist Club and serves on various athletic advisory committees. Layton believes that coaching is about more than winning—it’s about teaching athletes life skills, resilience and discipline that will serve them well beyond their time in sports.

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Girls Track & Field: Ryan Long – Notre Dame (Cape Girardeau) High School

Ryan Long has served as the head coach for both Boys and Girls Track & Field at Notre Dame (Cape Girardeau) High School for the past six years, where his programs have seen unprecedented success. Under Long's leadership, the girls team has claimed five district titles, including the first-ever district championship in school history in 2017. His athletes have achieved national recognition, with eight individual state champions and a female triple jumper ranked No. 1 in the nation. Long focuses on instilling values such as work ethic, accountability and respect in his athletes, preparing them to excel both on and off the field.

Girls Volleyball: Tonya Peck – Fair Grove High School

Tonya Peck has been the Girls Volleyball coach at Fair Grove High School for 24 years, amassing a career record of 612-177-53. In 2023, she led her team to a Class 2 State Championship. Peck has also won numerous district and conference titles. Peck's coaching philosophy centers on building strong relationships with her players, emphasizing teamwork and selflessness, and helping athletes develop the confidence and resilience to succeed in both sports and life.

***Baseball: Tim Vinson – Iberia High School**

Tim Vinson's dedication to coaching goes beyond wins and titles—he coaches for his players, a philosophy that has led Iberia High School's baseball team to historic success. In his 16 seasons, Vinson has amassed over 400 victories, but his most notable achievement came in 2023 when his team completed a perfect 28-0 season and won the Class 2 state championship. That season also earned Vinson Missouri High School Baseball Coaches Association Coach of the Year honors, while his team set a state record with four consecutive no-hitters and extended its winning streak to 36 games, the third longest in Missouri history. In addition to his role as a kindergarten physical education teacher, Vinson is a volunteer firefighter, exemplifying leadership and service both in the community and on the field.

*In addition to being named the Section 5 Baseball Coach of the Year, Vinson was also selected as the **2023-24 NFHS National Baseball Coach of the Year**. This prestigious honor recognizes Coach Vinson's leadership and dedication, not only to his team but to the sport of baseball on a broader level.

Softball: Kelsey Parrish – Diamond High School

Kelsey Parrish has led her softball teams to remarkable success over her 11-year coaching career, including two state championships in 2022 and 2024. Her teams have achieved a 190-77-2 record, with four conference titles and three state appearances. Parrish has earned her conference's Coach of the Year award four times. Her coaching philosophy focuses on relationships, building trust with her players, and preparing them to face life's challenges with resilience and confidence. Parrish remains dedicated to developing her athletes both on and off the field.

Boys Track & Field: Stewart Johnson – Hickman High School

Stewart Johnson has been the head coach for Boys and Girls Track & Field at Hickman High School for the past 12 years, leading his teams to four district titles and three top-five finishes at the state meet in recent years. During his tenure, Johnson has coached over 100 all-state performers and eight individual state champions. His leadership extends beyond the track as a former president of the Missouri Track and Cross Country Coaches Association and a dedicated

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mentor for student-athletes. Johnson emphasizes perseverance, accountability and creating positive experiences that help his athletes succeed in both sports and life.

Each of these coaches has demonstrated excellence in their respective fields and a commitment to education-based athletics. Their selection as Section 5 winners reflects their impact on the student-athletes they coach, as well as the respect they have earned from their peers.

According to the NFHS Coaches Association, these awards highlight individuals who have made a significant contribution to high school sports and who exemplify the highest standards of sportsmanship, ethics and integrity. The national award is especially notable for the level of competition and the recognition it brings to the school and community.

For more information about the NFHS Coaches Association and the full list of national and sectional award winners, please visit the [NFHS website](http://www.nfhs.org).

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