

History of Wyoming Coaches Association Hall of Fame

The Wyoming Coaches Association (WCA) was formed in 1965. The first president elected was Keith Bloom of Powell. After Keith served a one year term Art Hill, of Casper, was elected as the second president. The coaches association grew in membership over the next few years and began having annual coaching clinics at the University of Wyoming. Many of the early clinicians were coaches that had been selected as coaches of the year in their respective sports.

As the WCA continued to grow during the 70's and 80's talks began about the feasibility of having all-star games at the summer clinic and a Coaches Hall of Fame. During the presidential term of Bob Bolles (1982-84) he contacted Lynn Williams, the Executive President of the coaches association and asked him to explore the idea of all-star games in conjunction with the coaches' clinic.

All-Star Games

Lynn contacted other states to gather information and ideas about beginning these games. The all-star games began in the summer of 1983, with borrowed uniforms from the University of Wyoming. A committee of coaches was asked to select athletes and coaches to participate in these various activities. The players and coaches would have to pay their own expenses to help get the games started. The first sports involved were basketball, wrestling, and volleyball. Other sports have been added and deleted as the interest grew or faded. Golf was added and wrestling was dropped.

Hall of Fame

Bill Strannigan and Art Hill were contacted by then president, Bob Bolles, and asked if they would commission a committee to explore the idea of a WCA Coaches Hall of Fame. Bill and Art asked various coaches to serve on this committee to establish criteria for a coaches' hall of fame. The first meeting took place in September of 1983. Members of the committee included Bill Strannigan, Art Hill, Keith Bloom, Bud Nelson, Swede Erickson, Dario Soto, Phil Treick, Mick Lehner, Duane Freeman, Bob Robertson, Glen Burgess, Bud Milliken, Lynn Williams, Jack Rafferty, Ted Nichols, Tead Weaver, Jerry Campbell, Jack Allen, Jim Wiseman, Sandy Michelena, Bill Bernatow, Harry Geldien, and Bob Bolles. The committee members offered suggestions based on their knowledge and expertise. After much discussion the committee decided to gather samples of Hall of Fame criteria from the surrounding states of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, South Dakota, and Utah. The committee then decided to elect officers to lead subsequent discussions and meetings. The original officers were Art Hill (Chairman), Keith Bloom (Vice-Chairman), and Bill Strannigan (Secretary/Treasurer). A great deal of time was spent discussing the various states criteria. One criteria that seemed to be prevalent in many of the state's forms was the number of years' service to the profession. A second item that was frequently in the criteria was that a high percentage of professional service had to be achieved in the home state. The committee was steadfast that the coaches should have to coach for a minimum of twenty years with 80 percent of that service in Wyoming. The committee gleaned several other ideas from the material they had gathered. After much

discussion the committee decided a coach's success should also be an integral part of the requirements for inclusion into the Wyoming Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

The original criteria included:

- I. Service—200 points, 20 years of coaching minimum of which 80% must be earned in Wyoming at the high school level (9-12)
- II. Success—100 points

The next task, for the committee, was to develop a college division with similar criteria, for inclusion into the Wyoming Coaches Association Hall of Fame. A meeting was held on January 3, 1984 with the following coaches: Bill Farthing, Tead Weaver, Jim Wiseman, Bob Robertson, Jim McLeod, Bud Nelson, Swede Erickson, Bob Cook, Art Hill, Keith Bloom, and Bill Strannigan. The same coaches were elected as officers of this committee.

A meeting of the Hall of Fame committee was held January 23, 1984 to discuss the following items:

1. The continual screening of coaching applications
2. A corporate sponsor for the Hall of Fame
3. Possible sites for the Hall of Fame plaques
4. Date and place for the first Hall of Fame Banquet
5. Future sites for the Hall of Fame Banquet

Once the criteria had been established it was decided the induction of the inaugural class would take place in the fall of 1984. All high school head coaches, in the state, were sent an application and a copy of the criteria to qualify for the Wyoming Coaches Hall of Fame.

A screening committee was the governing body of the Hall of Fame. This committee reviewed the applications and established the inaugural class for the Wyoming Coaches Association Hall of Fame. The first class consisted of fifty members (43 living and 7 posthumous). The banquet was held in Laramie on September 28, 1984 at the Holiday Inn. George Kay was the Master of Ceremonies and Don Veal, President of the University of Wyoming, presented the plaques. Merback Awards was the Hall of Fame corporate sponsor. Each inductee paid \$100.00 to help defray the expense of his/her plaque. This fee would remain the same until it was raised in 1985 to \$150.00 for the 1986 inductees. This raise was necessary to cover the increased expense of the plaques. The inductees were given the opportunity to purchase their own Hall of Fame ring. Subsequent coaches applications would be received by a screening committee composed of active members of the Coaches Hall of Fame.

The site for the Hall of Fame plaques was established as the University of Wyoming Arena Auditorium. The Hall of Fame committee established Foster's Country Corner, in Laramie, as the official site for the HOF banquet.

President Keith Bloom recommended in 1989 that we elect a board of directors instead of having all present members of the HOF be the governing board. This recommendation was approved and members of the HOF were contacted about serving on this board. The following members agreed to accept the responsibility and serve as the official Board of Directors for the Hall of

Fame: LeRoy Sprague, Sandy Michelena, Ken Rocklitz, Bruce Hoffman, Don Nelson, Brent Williams, and Bob Bolles. This board also included the President, Keith Bloom; President-Elect, Bill Strannigan; and Secretary/Treasurer, Bud Nelson. It was decided to limit this board to a total of not more than thirteen members. When a board member leaves the committee a new person is asked by the board to serve. This new board member must be a member of the Wyoming Coaches Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame Board made a decision to raise the point total by 50 points for future candidates of the Hall of Fame in 1991. This decision coincided with the increased opportunities for candidates to obtain the points necessary to become a member. The new area added was for Professional Honors worth 50 points, bringing the total to 350 points.

In 1997 the board of directors decided to ask the individual school districts of the inductees to pay the fees for the coach being inducted. This was met with approval from most school districts. If a school district didn't cover the inductees' fees the individual would still have to pay for their own.

Hall of Fame Banquet Moved

At the meeting, after the 1998 Hall of Fame induction, the board of directors were made aware that the coaches association was moving their coaching clinic to the Parkway Plaza in Casper. The Hall of Fame Board decided it would also move their banquet to Casper coinciding with the clinic. At this time Keith Bloom and Bill Strannigan visited with Joe Dowler, from the University of Wyoming, about the necessary expansion of the Hall of Fame Wall.

In 2005 it was brought to the attention of the Hall of Fame Board that the Hall of Fame area in the Arena Auditorium would have to be moved. A proposal was introduced, by the University of Wyoming, that the Hall of Fame be moved to the Paul Roach Room at the south end of the Field House on the second floor. At this time the board explored several options, including moving the Hall of Fame from the University of Wyoming. Any move would create a large expense for the Hall of Fame. After much discussion it was decided to move the Hall of Fame to the Paul Roach Room and to explore the idea of a "kiosk" for the information center of the members' resumes. The kiosk could be purchased for \$5,560.00. New plaques would have to be purchased and installed in the new area at the University. These plaques would cost \$150.00. The old plaques were removed and many of them sold to the home schools of the inductees. The funds from these sales, and the establishment of a Kiosk Club, would cover most of the expenses of the plaques, kiosk, and the input of inductee information. The Hall of Fame Board decided it was necessary to assess each member \$100.00 for the Kiosk Club to offset the expense for the information input of each inductee's HOF information.

New Division Added

In March of 2010 the Wyoming Coaches' Association approached the Hall of Fame Board of Directors about the possibility of establishing a JH/MS Hall of Fame. They felt this was a good idea and definitely needed. It was unanimously approved. The WCA Board of Directors then

established and approved criteria for inclusion in the new Hall of Fame. It mirrored the three areas of the High School and College criteria:

- I. Service - 200 points: (20 years of coaching minimum of which 80% must be earned in Wyoming at the junior high/middle school level [6-8]).
- II. Success - 100 points; (The WCA established the WCA JH/MS Gold, Silver and Bronze Milestone Award which is used to gain these points).
- III. Professional Honors – 50 points

It was also decided that there would be a name board placed in the Paul Roach room at the University of Wyoming. It was placed next to the picture plaques of the High School/College coaches.

At the annual Hall of Fame/Coach of the Year banquet in July, 2011 the inaugural JH/MS class was inducted. There were six members in this inaugural class; (five living and one posthumous). There are now 16 Junior High/Middle School coaches who are members (2016).

50 Years Strong

The Wyoming Coaches' Association celebrated its 50th birthday in July at the 2015 banquet. All past Hall of Fame Inductees were invited to attend. There were fourteen members who were able to attend and be recognized.

Continuing Legacy

At the present time (2016) there are 208 High School and College coaches who have been inducted as members of the Wyoming Coaches Association Hall of Fame.