



The NFHS Voice



Hall of Fame Class Celebrates Value of High School Sports, Performing Arts

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Add patience to the list of benefits attributed to high school activities participation – at least that would be the case with the latest inductees in the NFHS National High School Hall of Fame.

After being named in March 2020 to the 38th class of the NFHS Hall of Fame that honors high school athletes, coaches, officials, administrators and performing arts educators, the 12 honorees have patiently waited through the pandemic and are on the precipice of finally being recognized for their incredible accomplishments.

In this past year, with more ups and downs than any year on record, and with many states unable to offer programs for periods of time, the connection

between high school sports and performing arts and success later in life is clearly demonstrated through this year's inductees.

Seven of the 12 honorees who will be inducted July 1 at the NFHS Summer Meeting in Orlando, Florida, are former high school athletes, and all were involved in multiple sports and activities in their high school days that led to their future success.

Most people remember **Tim Couch** as a record-setting quarterback in football at Leslie County High School in Hyden, Kentucky, but he was equally adept at basketball. In fact, as a senior, he led the state in scoring at 37 points per game.

In addition to playing tennis and softball, **Karyn Bye** was a trailblazer for girls ice hockey in Wisconsin. With no girls ice hockey team at River Falls High School in the late 1980s, Bye was team captain of the **boys** team! And this involvement eventually translated into Bye being an integral member of the U.S. Olympic women's ice hockey team that won a gold medal in 1998.

Three other athletes in this year's class were stellar three-sport athletes – **Matt Holliday** of Oklahoma, **Dave Logan** of Colorado and **Michele Smith** of New Jersey – and all believed their participation in other sports and activities propelled them to success in their primary sport.

Holliday, who opted for a career in professional baseball, was one of the top quarterbacks in the country and a three-year starter in basketball at Stillwater High School (SHS). After he retired from a 20-year career in pro baseball, Holliday returned to Stillwater and donated \$350,000 to SHS for artificial turf at his home field.

Logan's favorite sport at Wheat Ridge (Colorado) High School? "Whatever one I was doing at the time. When I was playing football, that's my favorite sport. When playing basketball, that's it. In the spring, it's baseball. I just played for the sheer fun of it." And if that wasn't enough, Logan was a trombone player in the school band for all three years of high school.

And he loved high school sports so much that after his NFL career concluded, Logan returned to the Denver area as a high school football coach. In the past 28 years, he has coached at four schools and won nine state titles and 290 games.

Smith was one of the nation's top softball pitchers at Voorhees High School in New Jersey, and she also excelled at field hockey and basketball. And the perseverance and determination she learned playing high school sports helped her rebound from a serious car accident after high school and excel at the highest level – leading the U.S. softball team to gold medals in 1996 and 2000 and becoming an analyst at ESPN.

The other two athletes in the class were involved in numerous other activities as well. **Maicel Malone** was one of the best track and field participants in Indiana history during her days at North Central High School in Indianapolis, but she was also involved in student government, junior prom, various clubs and was runner-up for homecoming queen. In short, her motto was, "get involved and stay involved."

Alex English was one of the top basketball players in South Carolina history at Dreher High School before his storied NBA career, but he also played football and was highly involved in many aspects of school life.

The three coaches who will be inducted next week collectively have been leading high school athletes for 139 years!

Rickey Baker led Hopi High School to 27 consecutive Arizona state boys cross country championships, but more importantly, he has positively affected the lives of hundreds of boys on the Hopi reservation.

Charles Berry coached boys and girls basketball in Arkansas for 57 years, including the final 51 years at Huntsville High School. And while **Terry Michler** has won more soccer games at Christian Brothers College High School in Missouri than anyone else, his impact goes much deeper than mere numbers.

One of Michler's former players noted the following: "It is by no exaggeration to say that I would not be where I am today without his influence. I would have ended up in a very bad place if not for Mr. Michler. . . A giant to so many young men and a personal hero of mine."

The other two inductees in the class – **Bill Farney** of Texas and **Robert Littlefield** of North Dakota – have made major contributions to high school sports and performing arts for almost 50 years each. Farney directed the Texas University Interscholastic League after serving as a teacher, coach, principal and superintendent, and Littlefield has been a speech and debate educator for more than 45 years.

After a year unlike any other in high school sports and performing arts, this year's class of the National High School Hall of Fame will truly be a celebration of why the value of these programs extends far beyond the playing fields and performance halls.

Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff is in her third year as executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She is the first female to head the national leadership organization for high school athletics and performing arts activities and the sixth full-time executive director of the NFHS. She previously was executive director of the Connecticut Association of Schools-Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference for seven years.