



SALUTE TO HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

DEC. 12, 2009



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ATLANTA FALCONS 2009 HIGH SCHOOL COACHES OF THE WEEK

WEEK OF 9/14

MIKE CARSON, AVONDALE

WEEK OF 9/21

LEROY RYALS, CLARKE CENTRAL

WEEK OF 9/28

PHILIP IRONSIDE, HILLGROVE

WEEK OF 10/5

RONNIE MILLEN, GRADY

WEEK OF 10/12

JAMES BALDWIN, JOHNSON, SAVANNAH

WEEK OF 10/19

JEFF BATTLES, HARDAWAY

WEEK OF 10/26

JAMIE AULL, MT. ZION

WEEK OF 11/2

JOHN SMALL, S. GWINNETT

WEEK OF 11/9

ADAM WINEGARDEN, DALTON

WEEK OF 11/16

JONATHAN SANKS, TOWERS

WEEK OF 11/23

JEREMY WILLIAMS, GREENVILLE

WEEK OF 11/30

RUSH PROPST, COLQUITT COUNTY



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RECOGNIZING THE TRUE HEROES OF HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

ALEX EWALT



Group of Falcons' 2009 honorees features five top coaches, one living legend

First of all, we would like to welcome all of you to the second annual Salute to High School Football Luncheon, hosted by the Atlanta Falcons.

The six coaches that are being honored today are here for a multitude of reasons, and winning football games is only one of them.

Each of the five Coaches of the Year and the Lifetime Achievement Award Winner, Billy Henderson, have made a positive impact in their schools, communities and sports, not to mention the lives of the individual players that compete under them.

These men are coaches, teachers and mentors like all of the football coaches of the Georgia High School Association member schools, and their teams' stellar 2009 seasons are all worthy of recognition.

A LIFETIME OF TEACHING ...

When you talk to Billy Henderson about his illustrious career coaching high school football, the word that comes up most often is "family."

On paper, there are the three football state titles at Clarke Central and the 167 former players that moved on to the college ranks. But what stays with Henderson most are the memories of how football can take a group of people and make them into a family, a community.

Before he was hoisting trophies as the coach of Clarke Central, Henderson credits a number of important people with instilling in him the values that he coached with throughout his career.

"My dad died when I was eight and my mother had four kids to raise," Henderson recalls. "There's no way to measure the sacrifices she made when I was in high school,

walking to and from work to save bus fare so I could play (sports). She was the biggest influence on my life.

"Everything I do right I learned from her. All the bad things I do I learned on my own," he says with a chuckle.

It was at Macon's old Lanier High School that Henderson knew his calling was to play professional baseball and, afterwards, to coach high school sports. His high school coach, John "Stooge" Davis, also had a great impact on him during his formative years, and was one of the first coaches to embrace weight training methods, which Henderson took with him in his coaching career.

Indeed, it was Henderson's high school athletics experience that set the stage for the coaching and teaching philosophies he would use until his retirement.

"When I went to Lanier High School, I went to the gym, I was 13 years old, and I saw two signs," Henderson remembers. "One said, 'We lead,' and the other one said, 'It can be done.' And if you go to the Clarke Central weight room today, you'll see those same big old signs."

After playing defensive end and being named all-SEC two times as a baseball player during his career at the University of Georgia, Henderson realized his dream of playing professional baseball. He was in the Cubs organization for two years and then, according to plan, he took his first coaching job at Jefferson under his old coach, Davis. From there, he moved to Athens High as a football assistant, and then tried his hand at the college level at Furman University and the University of South Carolina.

The defining moment of his early

coaching career, however, came when he accepted the head job at a brand new Macon school, Willingham High, in 1958.

"I was 29 at the time and I knew everything," Henderson says jokingly about taking the job at Willingham. "We were going to whip everybody. They might not even make a first down.

"That first season we were 0-7-3, we tied three games. But those kids that were there stuck together, and in a few short years we were whipping our rivals, Lanier High."

After compiling a 63-42-15 record at Willingham, Henderson spent a few years away from coaching before taking the job at Clarke Central, another football program in its infancy. The rest is history; the three titles and seven finals appearances, as well as the handful of NFL players the program has produced, speak for themselves. But it's a singular moment at the Athens school that can sum up Henderson's coaching career.

"One of my biggest thrills was back in 1977," he recalls. "We were in the weight room before practice. We had moms and dads and cheerleaders and players that were dressed for

practice, and we had our devotional.

"The young man who was our chaplain was going to close his prayer, and I didn't close my eyes. I looked out at that audience and I saw black hands and white hands, rich hands and poor hands, all sorts of denominations holding hands. And I said to myself, God, if everybody in this world had something like this group here, we'd have no problems in life."

WE SALUTE YOU ...

The five active coaches present at the luncheon all follow in the footsteps of what Coach Henderson exemplified during his time on the sidelines. Lassiter's Chip Lindsey, Griffin's Steve Devoursney, St. Pius' Paul Standard, Fitzgerald's Robby Pruitt, and Wesleyan's Franklin Pridgen have each excelled in their respective classifications this season, and will no doubt continue to make a positive impact through coaching.

So, to all of today's honorees, their families, and supporters of the great sport of high school football, the Atlanta Falcons organization congratulates you!

By Score Atlanta's Alex Ewalt.

BY THE NUMBERS

(accounts only for in-state records)

Combined '09 Coaches of the Year

Record this season: 62-5 (.925)

Record all time: 322-95-1 (.772)

Title game appearances: 2

Playoff appearances: 30

Years experience: 34

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SALUTE TO HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL LUNCHEON

Chip Lindsey

Class AAAAA (5A) – Lassiter High School
Total Years as High School Head Coach: 4

Years Coaching at Current School: 2 (2008, 2009)
Career Record and Winning Percentage at current school: 35-12 (.745)



Lassiter High School head coach Chip Lindsey is one of the best young coaches in the State of Georgia today. Before coming to Lassiter, Lindsey was the offensive coordinator for powerhouse Hoover High School in Hoover, Ala. While at Hoover in 2007, the Bucs averaged over 30 points per game and reached the third round of the state playoffs. Before coming to Hoover, he was the head coach at Colbert Heights High School, also in Alabama, and was an assistant football coach and head baseball coach at Deshler High School for four years.

In just two years coaching the Trojans, Lindsey has turned around a Lassiter program that hadn't made the playoffs since 2000, making it to the second round of the playoffs last season for just the second time in school history. This year, Lassiter completed an undefeated regular season and had one of the most explosive offenses in the state, scoring 70 points in their second-round playoff defeat of South Gwinnett before falling in the quarterfinals. Lindsey has also played an instrumental role in the development of senior quarterback Hutson Mason, the state's most prolific passer of all time.

Lindsey has been extremely successful in a short amount of time with the Trojans. Part of the reason for Lassiter's quick turnaround is Lindsey's spread offense that the Trojans run and the talent that has come through the halls of Lassiter recently. "(The spread offense) was an easy sell because it's a fun style of play," Lindsey told the Marietta Daily Journal earlier this season. "Our success is because we have good players. We have good players right now, and everyone is pulling in the same direction."

Lindsey is also the athletic director at Lassiter.

Photo courtesy of Ed Tunlington/et images.

Steve Devoursney

Class AAAA (4A) – Griffin High School
Total Years as High School Head Coach: 9
Years Coaching at Current School: 9 (2001-2009)
Career Record and Winning Percentage: 85-28 (.752)

Since taking over the head coaching job at Griffin in 2001, Devoursney has never had a losing season at the school, making the playoffs each year. This fall, his Bears enjoyed a 10-0 regular season, defeating each opponent by at least 12 points and allowing just under five points a game on defense over the first 10 games. On offense, Devoursney's Bears were dynamic as well, putting up no less than 24 points in any one game en route to averaging over 37 points per contest.

Earlier in the season, Devoursney earned a region win against Mt. Zion-Jonesboro, giving him 76 victories at the Spalding County school and sole possession of second all-time in the Griffin High coaching ranks behind Loyd Bohannon, who led the Bears to two state finals in 1978 and 1980.

Before being named the head coach of Griffin in 2001, Devoursney was a position coach at the school for two years and was the defensive coordinator for three years.

Including this season, Devoursney has led the Bears to the state semifinals three times (once in 2005 and again in 2008). In 2002 and 2004 he led the Bears to the quarterfinals.

This season, Devoursney led the bears to 13 total wins, which is second best on the all-time single-season win list for Griffin, while leading the Bears to a region title, his second region crown and Griffin's 11th in school history.

Photo courtesy of John Sullivan/Griffin Daily News.



Class AAA (3A) – St. Pius X
Total Years as High School Head Coach: 9
Years Coaching at Current School: 9, 2001- '09
Career Record and Winning Percentage: 75-30 (.714)

Standard took the Golden Lions to the State playoffs for the fourth year in a row and coached St. Pius to its first region title since the 1968 season. The Lions went 10-0 in the regular season with big wins over rivals Marist (for the second year in a row), Greater Atlanta Christian and Dunwoody. It was the first time that the Golden Lions had a perfect regular season since the George Maloof era. In the regular season, Pius' defense was more than stellar, yielding just 7.2 points per game, while its offense was explosive, putting up just under 40 points a contest.

Since taking over the head coaching position in 2001, Standard has compiled a record of 75-30, which puts him second on the school's all-time win list, with the first being the late Maloof. During his tenure with the Golden Lions, Standard has never suffered a losing season. The 12 wins that Standard's team achieved this season were the most since that '68 season.

Before being named the head coach for St. Pius, Standard was a very successful assistant, spending time at Dacula and Meadowcreek. Standard had great success with Dacula working for Kevin Maloof, George Maloof's son, as he helped the Falcons earn region titles in 1993, '94, '96 and '99.

Over the years, Standard has collected numerous coaching awards, such as Assistant Coach of the Year four times and DeKalb County Football Coaches Association Coach of the year in 2006. He was also named to the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association All-star staff in 2003.

Photo courtesy of St. Pius X High School.



Paul Standard

SALUTE TO HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL LUNCHEON



Robby Pruitt

Class AA (2A) – Fitzgerald High School
 Total Years as High School Head Coach: 26, 1984-09
 Years Coaching at Current School: 9, 2000-02, 2004-09
 Career Record and Winning Percentage: 272-50-1 (.844)
 State Championship Appearances: 9 (1 in Georgia)

Pruitt has led the Purple Hurricanes to nothing but success in his nine years as Fitzgerald head coach, winning at least 10 games in eight of those seasons and making the playoffs each time. This year it was more of the same, as Fitzgerald went undefeated in the regular season to earn a region title and No. 1 seed for the playoffs. Perhaps more impressive than the perfect regular season record, however, was the dominance with which Pruitt's team won: the Purple Hurricanes outscored their opponents 470-69 in their first 10 games.

Pruitt started his coaching career in Florida, where he was the head coach for University Christian from 1984-92. He experienced great success during his time there, winning four state titles and finishing runner-up in 1990. He also coached at Union County (Fla.) from 1993-99 and won three consecutive state titles there. He was inducted into the state High School Athletic Hall of Fame for winning more state titles than any other coach in Florida history and for becoming the youngest coach in Florida history to win 100 games, a feat he achieved in 1997. Also in that same year, he broke a state record for consecutive victories, as his team won 52 straight games dating back to 1994.

Pruitt came north to coach Fitzgerald in 2000 and made an immediate impact, as his team finished runner-up in his first year. During his time at Fitzgerald, he has reached the state title game once and has made the semifinals twice. Since starting his coaching career 25 years ago, Pruitt has a career record of 272-50-1.

Photo courtesy of Fitzgerald High School.



Class A (1A) – Wesleyan High School
 Total Years as High School Head Coach: 4
 Years Coaching at Current School: 4
 (2006-09)
 Career Record and Winning Percentage: 36-13 (.735)
 State Titles: 1, (2008)

Pridgen maintained the program's momentum from Wesleyan's surprise state championship run last season, leading his Wolves to an undefeated regular season and a region title in his fourth year as coach of the Wolves. Pridgen took the top job at the Norcross school in 2006 after

serving as an assistant at Athens Academy, Lovett and Wesleyan. This year, his Wolves gave up no more than a touchdown in any one regular season game – including five shutouts – while scoring nearly 41 points a contest.

He got his coaching career started in 1992 as an assistant at Athens Academy under the legendary Michael Gunn, serving as the tight ends and defensive ends coach. While at Athens Academy, Pridgen helped the program reach the state playoffs from 1993-95. After his stop there, he spent one season at Lovett and helped the team to a second-round playoff berth. Next, Pridgen helped then-head coach Will Jackson start the Wesleyan football program, where he was the defensive coordinator for three seasons. After three years off from coaching, he returned to Wesleyan as an assistant in 2003.

Over the past two seasons, Pridgen has been one of the most successful coaches in the state, as the Wolves won 24 consecutive games during that span. Last year, FOX 5 named Wesleyan as its Team of the Year for beating then-undefeated ECI in the state finals. Under Pridgen's tutelage, Wesleyan has yet to have a losing season.

Photo courtesy of Wesleyan School.

Franklin Pridgen

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Total Years as High School Head Coach: 35 (23 at Clarke Central, 12 at Willingham)
 Career Record and Winning Percentage: 286-107-16 (.718)

State Titles: 3 (Clarke Central: 1977, '79, '85)
 State Championship Appearances: 7

In his 23 years as head coach at Clarke Central, Henderson helped 167 of his players earn college football scholarships. He racked up 222 wins with the Gladiators (285 in his career). Henderson took over the Clarke Central program in 1973, its fourth season, and won his first state championship in 1977. A member of the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, Henderson coached the Gladiators to three state titles.

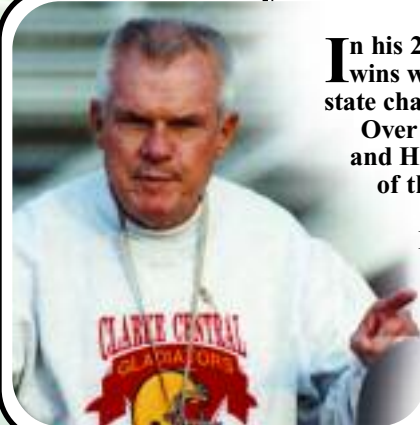
Over the years, Henderson coached the likes of former NFL player and Ole Miss star Willie Green, current NFL kicker John Kasay and Houston Texans defensive coordinator Frank Bush. He also coached former Atlanta Falcons defensive end Chuck Smith, a member of the 1998 Super Bowl Team.

Henderson started his coaching career as an assistant at Jefferson High School under his former high school coach at Lanier High School, John "Stooge" Davis, and was an assistant at Athens High and Mt. de Sales Academy before becoming a head coach. He got his first head coaching job at brand-new Willingham High in Macon and coached there from 1958-69 until it merged with several other high schools to become Central High.

He started his tenure with Clarke Central in 1973 and ended his career there in 1995. With 285 wins over his 35-year-career, Henderson is ninth all-time in Georgia. Henderson coached numerous sports other than football, among them baseball and basketball. He also coached on the collegiate level, making stops at Furman and South Carolina.

Henderson played college football and baseball at the University of Georgia and was a two-time all-SEC pick in baseball.

Photo courtesy of Athens Banner-Herald.



Billy Henderson



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