

2011 IHSSCA SPECIAL AWARDS BOYS --- FINALIST RESUMES

MYRO RYS SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

GENEVA

The Geneva boys' soccer team showed a level of sportsmanship throughout the 2011 season that should be emulated by all teams. During our contest, which is always highly emotional, the Geneva squad held its composure throughout the match, even though the score was not in their favor. After a hard foul that resulted in a Geneva player getting a concussion, the Geneva players stayed focused and played fair during the time remaining. I watched many other games throughout the season that included Geneva and the sportsmanship continued. This is a testament to the Geneva Soccer Program and its leader, Ryan Estabrook. The Geneva Vikings should be highly considered for this sportsmanship award.

Mark Gianfrancesco
Batavia Boys' Soccer

KELLY

During the Chicago City playoffs, Curie beat Kelly HS in Penalty Kicks. Kelly was clearly the better team with possession most of the game; so it is easy to assume the Kelly players were upset. Curie and Kelly had to ride the same bus home together because the bus company was short on buses. This could have been a recipe for disaster with any other team, but not with Kelly. Curie players were dropped off first and while walking off the bus ALL the Kelly players clapped, cheered, and wished Curie good luck in the next round. The Curie coaching staff and players were all moved by this gesture. The class and positive attitudes of the team are all due to Stan Mietus. Any Public League team that faces Kelly knows that win or lose, the Kelly players will all show great sportsmanship. Stan is teaching more than soccer with these intercity students; he is teaching them how to be a positive, hardworking member of the community. In Stan's career of 17 years and 355 games as a head coach (12 years for boys, 17 years for girls) the Kelly program has only 2 red cards! The boys have a streak of 237 straight games without a red card. Stan has also never cut any player from the program; giving every student a chance to play for their school. This year 105 students got a chance to play soccer at Kelly for all 3 levels (V, JV, Soph). Stan is a role model to his players and to all the coaches in the Public League.

PALATINE

The varsity soccer team at Palatine High School plays extremely hard, with a tremendous level of energy and passion. This year, I was particularly impressed with their hard level of play and how they did so with fairness, respect and positivity. In moments of celebration (after each of their goals), they were thrilled but still classy. When the contest ended in overtime, and they were on the losing end of the 3-2 battle, they handled themselves with pride and character. Shaking hands wasn't just a requirement, they were gracious and kind in congratulating us and giving us credit for the win. I was impressed in many, many ways. From their coaches, to their players, parents and administrators, they are all excellent representatives of their school and community.

Scott Steib
Barrington HS

ASSISTANT COACH OF THE YEAR

JIM BRAUN – NAPERVILLE CENTRAL

Jim Braun began his coach career at Naperville Central in the fall of 1981 as a volunteer assistant to John Paskvalich. During his tenure at Central, Jim has coached at the sophomore, junior varsity and JV2 levels at NCHS. When the conference switched to the JV2 level several years ago, Jim took on the responsibility of coaching a level that had not existed before at the school. Through his coaching and hard work, Jim has turned the level into a huge success. His athletes grow as players, often able to play at the JV1 or varsity level the next year. He has instilled the belief in his players that if they work hard and do things the right way, they will be able to have the success that they want. It is through his work as a coach that Naperville Central is able to sustain a complete JV2 level each and every year.

During his 30 year tenure as a boys assistant soccer coach at Naperville Central, Coach Braun has helped three different varsity coaches achieve success. His insights into the game, both on the field and in scouting, have led to many conference and regional championships. Throughout his many years at Central, Jim has helped new assistant coaches get a feel and understanding of how to coach at the high school level. He is always willing to do what is best for the program, which is one of the reasons he has been such a major part of Central's success over the last three decades.

The players at Central enjoy playing and working hard for Coach Braun, and he makes their season memorable, which is the ultimate compliment to a coach. Seniors at Central have a tradition of naming their favorite soccer memory on Senior Night. Every year there are several seniors who mention Coach Braun in their memory. It could be a game they played in with him, an expression he used, or a practice activity they loved. But over the last 30 years, Jim Braun has had a positive impact on hundreds of soccer players at Naperville Central. This is the reason he should be Assistant Coach of the Year.

MARK COUPER – ROCKFORD BOYLAN

Mark Couper has been a long time assistant coach for Boylan Catholic. He has been a staple in the Boylan boys and girls soccer programs for almost 25 years. He played at Boylan in the mid 80's while leading us to our first state tournament appearance in 1987. He was then my freshman coach in 1992 and later was my assistant Varsity coach in 1994 – 1995. Mark has been an assistant coach for 8 state tournament appearances with the boys program and head coach for 4 state tournament appearances with the girls.

As the boys assistant coach he compliments my style of coaching very well. We are both Boylan Catholic Alumni and have extreme pride in our program and the tradition that we have established at Boylan. As the head coach my worries are game and training management as well as technical and tactical preparation before games and adjustments during games. Mark brings the things that I'm not especially great at, and that is the motivation and encouragement that every athlete needs to succeed in our sport.

Last season in 2010 we made our 10th appearance in the state finals and won our first state championship. It was a proud moment for us and especially Mark Couper who has been through it all. Without his motivational tactics and love for both the game and the athletes, we may have fallen short again but that extra speech and the knowledge that Mark has for the game was a major part in us winning the 2010 Class 3A State Championship last fall. He prides himself in team defense as he was an All-Midwest Sweeper for Boylan and in the past 2 seasons we have given up a total of 24 goals (13 last season and 11 this season). Our # 1 goal in a game is to get a shutout. Your best chance of winning is making sure the ball does not go in the back of your net. Mark brings the intensity to the defensive side of the ball and is a main reason we are undefeated this season and have lost a total of 1 game in the past 2 seasons combined. Most assistants have a very limited role as a coach but Mark is a very special coach who the kids look at as a co-head coach and listen to everything he has to say.

As I am very proud to be the head coach of this team who is currently (26-0) and among the top ranked teams in the state and the nation. I am proud to have Mark Couper as my assistant coach. He is a well respected coach throughout the state with both the IHSSCA, the great coaches in Illinois High School Soccer but also with every soccer player that comes through our program year after year.

This is why I believe Mark Couper should be the IHSSCA Assistant Coach of the Year!!

Chris Mera

Head Coach

Boylan Catholic High School

GREGG KOELLER – GLENBARD NORTH

Gregg Koeller has been an assistant coach for 22 years, 17 of those years were at Glenbard East with the last five at Glenbard North. Gregg has also taken the time to work with the Carol Stream Panthers soccer program for 5 years to help mold players and give back to the community. Gregg has always been willing to go the extra mile for his players and give them opportunities to succeed in the classroom and on the playing field. Gregg has been involved with soccer for an extremely long time and is well respected amongst peers, coaches, educators, administrators, community members, and players. His hard work has never gone unnoticed.

For 20 years Gregg also was the Head Girls Coach at Glenbard East. Twice his teams were named sectional sportsmanship winners and in 1993 he was recognized as the State Girl's Coach of the Year. Gregg has been a valued assistant, a great resource, and a person that has been very approachable and able to offer great insight about coaching. His experiences have always been valued by coaches and his opinions should be something that any young coach should value. Gregg Koeller is an outstanding person and role model for any coach to follow.

Gregg is both a student and teacher of the game. At practice Gregg communicates his expectations and ensures that the players are able to reach his goals. Through Gregg's patience and persistence his teams always make tremendous strides as the season progresses. He instills the meaning of "team" in all his players. From 1999-2003 Gregg's teams won 5 consecutive DVC conference titles which included 2 successive undefeated seasons.

While instructing his players Gregg effectively motivates them by providing them with positive feedback. His demeanor is level at all times and creates a positive learning environment during training sessions and games. On a daily basis, Gregg represents a positive role model for the players to follow. His players not only learn the skills of the game but they are also building character.

Through his years of coaching Gregg has served as a mentor to his players. Gregg is always there for his players and has their best interest in mind. His concern for the players well being extends beyond the playing field. As a mentor, teacher and coach - Gregg embodies what we want to teach our players.

Gregg Koeller has dedicated himself to the development of young men through the game of soccer. He continues to have a positive impact on the players around him by instilling both life lessons and the knowledge of the game. Gregg is very deserving of this award for his work the last 22 years and should be highly considered for State Assistant Coach of the Year.

Greg Chrisman

Head Boys Soccer Coach

Glenbard North High School

Josh Adler

Head Boys Soccer Coach

Glenbard East High School

COACH OF THE YEAR

JIM KONRAD – NAPERVILLE NORTH

A program is often a reflection of the head coach, and the Huskies of Naperville North are a perfect example of this. Jim Konrad's emphasis on the concepts of hard work, discipline and sportsmanship are displayed on the field by his team. His players respect the officials and do not complain about the calls on the field. It is no surprise that this happens, since Jim displays the sideline behavior that coaches often talk about, but then overlook in their own games. You can see the stress that Jim has put into the idea that hard work will lead to success by the way his players go about the game with an endless amount of passion and desire. The Huskies are always dangerous on dead balls because of the discipline that the players display on set pieces. They always have a player in the right place at the right time, and this is due to coaching since we know that it doesn't just happen. Finally, Jim has taught the value of helping others to the Huskie soccer players by having them participate in the Juvenile Diabetes Walk each year. This event takes a lot of time and organization, but the values it helps instill in his players will lead them to be better people.

Since becoming an assistant in the fall of 1997, and then assuming head coaching duties in 2003, Jim and the Huskies have experienced a tremendous amount of success. This year however, has been truly special one at Naperville North. Entering the season, the Huskies were nationally ranked in several publications, and that kind of publicity is often very difficult to deal with. Under Jim's leadership, the Huskies have performed up to and beyond expectations. They are currently 21-0-1, one of only two undefeated teams in 3A. They won the Best of the West Tournament early in the season, a tournament that featured several top-ranked teams. Naperville North then went 7-0 in the DuPage Valley Conference for the second year in a row, outscoring opponent 19-1 this year. Additionally, the Huskies won the Morton Invitational, beating quality opponents such as Batavia and Edwardsville to capture the title. Coach Konrad's team won the Metea Valley Regional, and have advanced to the Naperville North Sectional final.

The success that Naperville North has had on the field this year, along with the sportsmanship they have displayed throughout the season make Jim Konrad a worthy recipient of the Coach of the Year award.

KEVIN O'CONNOR – MARMION ACADEMY

When one thinks of Marmion Soccer, the first thing that comes to mind is Kevin O'Connor. Kevin started Cadet Soccer in 1994 when his son enrolled at the Academy. He has been the sole head coach for the program since and will be dearly missed by his players. In his years at Marmion, Kevin has always had a winning record and boasts an impressive 247-104-36 career record. From 1998 through 2004, Marmion had a 58-game (Suburban Catholic Conference) winning streak. With this tremendous success, Marmion has produced 10 Division I Soccer players plus another 35 who've played collegiately at Divisions II and III plus NAIA.

Kevin is more than just a soccer coach both to the Marmion community, as well as in West Chicago where he teaches Physical Education. He has acted as a leader with West Chicago District 33 Athletics' Programs and as a mentor to new teachers. Players confer that Kevin is always there for them, not just athletically, but academically and personally as well. He attempts to develop personal relationships with each of the students and athletes he encounters. He has been an example for new coaches entering the coaching realm.

On three occasions, in 2004, 2007 and again this past summer, Kevin has led his soccer team on trips to Brazil for a combination of training and missionary work. The team brought supplies, shoes, children's medicine and vitamins for an orphanage where they spent time daily with the children and also helped to build a futsal court. The experiences have been rewarding and fulfilling for Kevin and the players as well as for the chaperones that have assisted with the trip. It is because of Kevin, with the support of alumni and friends that these players will have memories of an experience that will last a lifetime.

As founder of Marmion Academy Soccer, Kevin will be missed and impossible to replace. However, because of the great legacy he began, Marmion soccer will continue to be a successful program and a great place for young soccer players to develop their talent in future years. Kevin O'Connor is truly deserving of the IHSSCA Coach of the Year Award.

MARK VALINTIS – LEYDEN

It has become increasingly clear in the past five seasons as Leyden HS Head Coach, that Coach Mark Valintis has captured the attention of not only the soccer student athletes in his community, but the soccer community in general leading to his third consecutive winning season and second consecutive West Suburban Gold Conference Championship. After a tough first two seasons in 2007 (9-8-10) and 2008 (7-10-2), winning a combined 16 games, Coach Valintis has worked at building his program that has since won 48 games and averaged 16 a year over the past three seasons. Looking beyond the wins and losses, it is easy to understand why he has had success both on and off the field.

Coach Valintis is all about kids and dedicates a remarkable amount of time and energy to be sure the families in his community can relate to the high school program. The Leyden HS soccer program attracts kids that will rarely be seen in any club environment, due to the costs and travel involved. The past 5 years have provided only 3 players in his program with club soccer involvement. As a result, Coach Valintis invests countless hours providing soccer opportunities to the students of Leyden HS, to keep them engaged in the school environment. The 2010 and 2011 IHSSCA Sectional Coach of the Year promotes community involvement with his players, by having them helping with youth soccer camps, serving as referees in local youth leagues, working as assistant coaches with local youth coaches and has a total of 13 players this year, who were selected by school leadership to be involved in a Freshman Mentoring Program. These are just two valuable examples that show his commitment both in the school and out in the community.

Coach Valintis and his players in two remarkable incidents this past season, demonstrated the mark of character and sportsmanship of the highest regard. During the Leyden tournament, a Larkin player collapsed after the game and began to have seizures. Coach Valintis immediately came to Coach Ken Hall's help and took control of the situation. Coach Valintis and his trainer began first aid on the young man, while other players of his program came to help get water, ice, and towels. Parents came to help, Leyden players fanned out to provide directions to the back of the school for emergency personnel to find the location. The young man survived this ordeal because of Coach V's quick reaction and supportive team. From speaking with Coach Valintis, I know that he attended the hospital and provided Coach Hall a ride back to Elgin so Coach Hall's family would not have to drive out to Franklin Park to get him. In another incident during the season, a player from an opponent approached his own bench during a game to get water. Upon getting no reaction or help from teammates, a Leyden player sitting on the Leyden sideline, without direction from Coach Valintis, carefully tossed the opposing player a bottle to drink. Mark simply thanked his player for doing the right thing.

Mark Valintis of Leyden High School represents the very best in high school soccer teaching and coaching on the field, in his school and in his community, as the IHSSCA Coach of the Year for 2011.

SOCCER PERSON OF THE YEAR

NORM HILLNER – LAKE PARK

Since 1981, Norm Hillner has been pacing up and down the Lancer sideline guiding, motivating and mentoring young men who proudly wear the Lake Park jersey. His coaching career is legendary, managing in over 650 games, but as part of the coaching fraternity it is important to note the work Norm Hillner has invested time in outside of the lines.

Norm is a Past President of the IHSSCA having led the organization for some 7 years. In that time, the organization has substantially grown and has become one of the largest coaching organizations in the state.

“Norm is one of the real giants in our profession. His work with the players at lake Park, his countless hours of involvement in the IHSSCA, his hosting of clinics that featured some of the top collegiate coaches, provided many of us with opportunities to continue to grow in our soccer coaching pursuits.” Coach O’Conner (Marmion) “

Norm has orchestrated the logistics of the IHSSCA All State banquet for years and the task of providing long lasting memories for some 800 people is no easy feat, hence the reason many shy away from the responsibility. As the master of ceremony, he could easily take his place at the head table center stage and delegate, but instead we’ll find Norm in the coat check welcoming guests as they arrive.

“There are a lot of people who talk about doing things, but Norm actually does them. He has great energy for the sport” Coach Effort (Buffalo Grove)

Norm Hillner is a past winner of the prestigious Soccer Person of the Year Award, and has earned that right again in 2011. Although he will step down from many of the responsibilities he has catered too in 2011, it will surprise no one if he decides to remain involved in some capacity or another. “I’m not convinced that anyone will ever understand the countless hours he has put in on behalf of all the student athletes who have ever played high school soccer in Illinois” Coach Wiggins(Hinsdale Central)

Each and every year many go out of their way to improve the standard of play, the experience both on and off the field, and to facilitate an environment that ignites a passion for the game that will last a life time. Norm has raised the bar as it relates to service and commitment for the game, its players and coaches in the State of Illinois. I for one will miss his fire on the sideline and his eye for detail and quality of service in managing his duties with the coaches association. The IHSSCA would be proud to have a person of Norm Hillner’s integrity and character represent all of us as the 2011 Soccer Person of the Year. Congratulations to all those that are nominated.

J. Guy Callipari Wheaton Warrenville South High School

ANDREW RICKS – LANE TECH

The Soccer Person of the Year for the Chicago Section is **Andrew Ricks** of Lane Tech. Andrew’s hard work and dedication impact not only the athletes he coaches at Lane, but also soccer players and coaches across the city. As varsity boys coach, Andrew oversees five teams: 1 varsity, 1 junior varsity, and 3 frosh/soph. While many CPL schools do not field a third level team, Lane is the only school in the city with 3 teams at the sophomore level. Under his direction soccer is thriving at Lane Tech. The varsity team finished second in the CPL post-season tournament and the junior varsity went undefeated to win the city championship at that level.

Besides running the soccer program at Lane, Andrew serves as the IHSSCA coordinator for our section and President of the Chicago Public League Soccer Coaches Association (CPLSCA). As President of the city coaches’ association he is responsible for selecting and organizing four All-Conference teams as well as the All-City and All-Academic teams. Every award winner receives a certificate and a tee shirt and is honored at halftime of the city championship game.

In addition to the impact he has on the student athletes at Lane and across the city Andrew has a positive impact on the coaches across the city. His level headed and thoughtful approach as well as his experience and expertise have provided steady leadership and guidance to the young coaches and the CPLSCA. For all the above reasons Andrew Ricks is a worthy candidate for Soccer Person of the Year for the State of Illinois.

DON WOELFEL – CIVIC MEMORIAL

Don Woelfel has been coaching for 35 years. He started the soccer program at Civic Memorial High School in 1976 and he has been the only coach at that school. His first season saw rough times with many lopsided losses but he turned around the program quickly in the ensuing seasons. However, in the early 80’s the player numbers were so low that it appeared the soccer program could collapse. Coach Woelfel kept the program in tact even though they could not field a varsity program for a year. By the late 80’s his program was on the rise and in 1989 his small school took a page out of the movie Hoosiers when they defeated Granite City. Civic Memorial earned the top-rated status in Southern Illinois but they were narrowly defeated 1-0 by Granite City in the playoffs. Granite City went on to win the state title in that season. Perhaps more important than winning, Don Woelfel has always been a gentlemen with respect to other coaches and other programs. In years where he had strong teams, he was quick to pull his starters so as to allow the other team dignity rather than running the score up which had been done to him in his early years. He has always been generous to others and an ambassador for the sport. Coach Woelfel’s contributions to the sport place him in a unique status and one worthy of recognition for soccer person of the year.