

## **2023 Football Alberta Award Winners**

Football Alberta is proud to announce the winners of the following Coach/Official/Volunteer Awards for the 2023 season. Each person recognized has been informed and will be receiving a commemorative plaque from the Football Alberta office. Please note that the **Norm Kimball Coach of the Year Award** goes to the overall coach of the year in all disciplines in Alberta.

### **Rob and Grace Zittlau Media Award**

#### **Mack Cassidy - Drumheller H.S.**

Mack Cassidy has done game film, promotional photos, and highlight videos for the Drumheller Titans for the past two years and the upgrade to the program has been amazing. Players and parents alike are now able to thrill in a highlight package and action shots after every game. The effect that has had on recruiting is palpable. His work in the game film department had also been critical to Drumheller advancing to the last two Alberta Bowls at the Tier IV level. Mack also offers his skills to the Bantam, Pee-Wee and Atom teams in town as a big part of one of Alberta's football hotbeds. For his going above and beyond in the support and promotion of the high school team in Drumheller, we are pleased to present the Rob and Grace Zittlau Media Award to Mack Cassidy.

### **Football Alberta Official of the Year**

#### **Chris Thomas - Whitecourt**

Chris Thomas has been the go-to guy in Whitecourt for officiating for over a decade. He has worked hard to ensure that his crew is educated and up to date each year to provide quality officiating to the local high school home games. He also is instrumental in arranging for crews to cover home games in Valleyview, High Prairie, Peace River, Edson, and Slave Lake. A busy man, but football in north central Alberta is much better because of Chris Thomas' efforts and we are proud to present him with the Football Alberta Official of the Year.

### **Novice Coach of the Year (Co-Winners)**

#### **Colton Bown - Hinton Wolfpack 6-a-side**

Taking over a team that is one of the most remotely located ones in Alberta, is tough enough but Colton Bown managed to not only stabilize the program at Harry Collinge H.S. but take the Hinton Wolfpack to heights it had never known before at the high school 6-a-side level - all in his second year on the job. In 2023, the Wolfpack had a solid season then took off in the playoffs beating #4 ranked Breton Cougars in the quarterfinals then taking out the #1 ranked Millwood Christian Royals in the Semi-Finals. Unfortunately, the Cinderella story ended there as they were defeated by the J.C. Charyk Hawks in the Alberta Bowl but still an amazing season for a team that had never been heard from before at the highest levels of 6-a-side. All due to a great job from a great young coach, Colton Bown who we are very proud to present as co-winner of the Novice Coach of the Year for 2023.

#### **Clay Nagel - Crescent Heights H.S. (Medicine Hat)**

Clay Nagel's work at the bantam level of football in Medicine Hat has added a definite upgrade to the high school's feeder team - the Crescent Heights Jr. Vikings. Described as a coach with a great ability to connect with his players, in only his second year of coaching, Clay led the Vikings to the Rangeland Bantam League Championships and a close 27-22 loss in the Provincial Tier II Final to Notre Dame from

Red Deer. A great young coach with a solid future ahead of him and the co-winner of the Novice Coach of the Year - Clay Nagel.

### **Atom/Pee-Wee Coach of the Year**

#### **Marlow Weldon - Sherwood Park Rams Atom**

Marlow Weldon is a busy man. Since taking over the Sherwood Park Rams Atom program seven years ago he has grown it to now feature three teams at three different levels of play in the Capital District Minor Football Association. Not only that, but he also coaches all three teams as well as helping out as an assistant with the Rams Pee-Wee Program as well. Coaching Atom football is tough having to deal with the large range of abilities as well as emotions for 10 year olds. Coach Weldon is noted as a very patient, inclusive coach who also gets results from his players and teams. Whether they are on the top team or the lower teams for the Rams, every player gets his best and for that reason we are proud to present the Atom/Pee-Wee Coach of the Year to Marlow Weldon.

### **Bantam Coach of the Year**

#### **Tim Henderson - Okotoks Eagles**

Tim Henderson has been the man with the Eagles for a considerable amount of time and has always put out quality contenders from the town of Okotoks. In 2023, he faced a terrific challenge as the injury bug plagued his team all season long. In fact they were only able to field a full roster of 36 players in half of the games they played. Still the Eagles persevered and clinched a playoff spot in the Calgary Bantam Football Association in their very last regular season game. From there they won the Division II Championship in the CBFA, then went on to win the Football Alberta Tier III Provincial Championship with a tight 18-14 win over the Edmonton Chargers. An excellent season and an excellent job by their coach - Tim Henderson, the 2023 Bantam Football Coach of the Year.

### **High School 6-a-side/9-a-side Coach of the Year**

#### **Michael Bachinsky - Holy Redeemer Rebels (Edson)**

Michael Bachinsky is the heart and soul of football in Edson. Building a program from a tiny school population wise is always a challenge, but add to that the uphill climb of the distances that 6-a-side programs have to travel in the province and you have to have a truly special leader to make it work. The Rebels have been a top five program at 6-a-side for several years now. Their consistent delivery of excellent football has mostly to do with the focus on developing character, which Coach Bachinsky is noted for. In 2023 they spent most of the season ranked #3 and dropped a tough one in the Provincial Semi-final to the eventual champion J.C. Charyk Hawks. Another great year for the Rebels led by a strong leader in Michael Bachinsky - the 6-a-side/9-a-side Coach of the Year for 2023.

### **High School Tier IV Coach of the Year**

#### **John Lumby - St. Paul Lions**

John Lumby is a long-time developer of football in St. Paul. He was the driving force behind the creation of the bantam team in St. Paul but it is for his work at the high school level that he is being recognized today. As defensive coordinator for the Lions, John was an integral part of leading the team to three Tier IV Alberta Bowl appearances in 2017, 2018 and 2022. The only problem was there were no wins combined with those appearances. Not so much in 2023 with the Lions not only upsetting the Holy Rosary Raiders in the Wheatland Championship game but blasting through Provincials with Coach

Lumby's defense leaving no doubt at the Alberta Bowl as the Lions routed the defending champion Drumheller Titans 41-0. For long term and current excellence, John Lumby is the High School Tier IV Coach of the Year for 2023.

### **High School Tier III Coach of the Year**

#### **Mackenzie Enger - Ardrossan Bisons**

2023 was Mackenzie Enger's third season as the Head Coach of the Bisons. In 2021 they went 1-7, in 2022 they went 4-4, and this past season the team had an excellent regular season finishing second in the Edmonton Metro's Gilfillan Division with a 5-1 record. In the playoffs, the Bisons made it to the Gilfillan Conference Championship game and lost to ME Lazerte, a school four times their size, in a competitive game. The Bisons also decided to move up from Tier 4 to Tier 3 in the ASAA provincials. In the provincial quarter finals, they defeated the Bonnyville Voyageurs 45-0. In the Semi's they lost to the eventual Provincial Champions Holy Rosary Raiders. Coaching at Edmonton's smallest school, his team finished with a 8-3 record, Gilfillan Conference Silver medalists and ASAA Tier 3 Bronze Medalists and has earned Mackenzie Enger recognition as the High School Tier III Coach of the Year.

### **High School Tier II Coach of the Year**

#### **Jason Lafferty - Bellerose Bulldogs (St. Albert)**

Jason Lafferty pulled off a unique three-peat in 2023. As the head coach of both the senior and junior teams at Bellerose High School in St. Albert he led both teams to League Championships. As well, he moonlighted with the West Edmonton Raiders as an assistant coach and helped them win the Capital District Minor Football Associations Tier I Bantam Championship. His senior Bulldogs were his crowning achievement as the team went 10-1 on the season, capturing the Miles Conference title in the Metro Edmonton Association having gone winless the season before. A true leader in the sport, Jason demands accountability and mutual respect from his players and leads Bellerose's Indigenous Student Support program as well. For a three-peat for the ages, Jason Lafferty is the Tier II Coach of the Year.

### **High School Tier I Coach of the Year**

#### **Garth Melrose - Ernest Manning Griffins (Calgary)**

Winning a Provincial Tier I Championship at the Alberta Bowl is not easy, especially for a high school that had never even been close before, but that's exactly what Garth Melrose's Ernest Manning Griffins did in 2023. The program at Ernest Manning had spent most of its existence toiling in Division II in Calgary, with mixed results. Then a few years ago a new commitment from the staff and administration of the school focussing on excellence began and the final touch to the picture was hiring Coach Melrose. With him in command, the Griffins have won two consecutive Calgary Division I titles and in 2023 advanced to their first ever Alberta Bowl final in school history. In that game, the Griffins staged the largest comeback in event history clawing back from 18 points down in the second half to defeat the defending champion Raymond Comets 28-24. A historically relevant season indeed led by a great head coach and the 2023 High School Tier I Coach of the Year - Garth Melrose.

### **Norm Kimball Coach of the Year**

#### **Chris Morris - University of Alberta Golden Bears (Edmonton)**

Playing in arguably the toughest conference in Canadian University football, the Golden Bears - led by head coach Chris Morris - had a breakout year in 2023. Posting a 7-3 record and losing a heartbreaker in

the Hardy Cup to the Canada West Champion and Vanier Cup finalist UBC Thunderbirds, the Bears posted their first winning season since 2005. Coach Morris is also integral in the development of football in the Edmonton Area, running several development camps and other on-field opportunities for players from atom to high school and in both flag and tackle. He has also created many innovative ways to raise funds for the operation and scholarships necessary to keep his team on par with the other teams in the Canada West. A hard-working coach who is seeing the fruits of his labor pay off in spades - Chris Morris is the 2023 Norm Kimball Coach of the Year.

### **Gary Hobson Volunteer of the Year**

#### **Rick Haines - J.C. Charyk Hawks (Hanna)**

Football is thriving in Hanna because of the contributions of Rick Haines. Rick was the driving force behind the return of football to J.C. Charyk high school in 1995 after a 40-year absence. The program, where he has served in many capacities, has gone on to establish itself as one of the premier 6-a-side high school teams in Canada. As well, Rick was the main organizer behind the installation of artificial turf on a 6-a-side specifically designed field in Hanna, creating a destination for major events at that level of football including Alberta/Saskatchewan Border Battles and USA vs. Canada All-Star games. Without a man like Rick Haines behind the scenes the programs in Hanna would not be as excellent as they are and for that we are proud to honor him with the 2023 Gary Hobson Volunteer of the Year Award.

### **Football Alberta Hall of Fame/Life Membership Awards**

#### **Dr. James Adams - Strathcona County**

It's safe to say that for the past 40 years, if you played football at all in Strathcona County, you know who Dr. James Adams is. Starting in 1976 as head trainer for the Edmonton Eskimos of the CFL, "Doc" Adams finished his medical degree and has been reliably volunteering to provide medical assistance and coverage to high school and minor football teams in the Sherwood Park area since 1983. He also spent 27 years as team doctor for the Edmonton Wildcats of the CJFL up to and including last season. The on-field care, access to quick diagnosis and medical clearance has made Strathcona County one of the safest places to play football in Canada. Rain, snow, wind or heat you can rely on Doc Adams to be present on the sideline having taken care of multiple generations of players. For that and his tireless dedication to ensuring our kids safety and care we are proud to induct Dr. James Adams into the Football Alberta Hall of Fame.

#### **Gino Castellan - Notre Dame High School (Red Deer)**

The Godfather of Football in Central Alberta, Gino Castellan has been a major contributor to football in Alberta for over 30 years. Starting as a summer football outreach coordinator for Football Alberta while he finished his master's degree at the University of Alberta in 1990, Gino became the head football coach at Camille J. LeRouge High School in Red Deer (the precursor to Notre Dame H.S.) in 1991 and immediately had an impact. By 1995 he had them in the Provincial Tier II Final where he lost a close one to Brooks. In 1996 he started his 27 years of involvement with Football Alberta's Team Alberta. As an assistant coach he was a part of four National Championships in 1997, 1998, 2000 and 2001 and won one more as the team's General Manager in 2007. He still maintains the position of G.M. and has also served on the Football Alberta Executive Committee since 2005 and was on the Board of Directors for Football Canada from 2007 to 2010. If that wasn't enough, he has also spent time as a Commissioner for various minor leagues in Central Alberta and was the host of the ASAA's Alberta Bowl in 2023. One of

Alberta's leading developers of football, Gino Castellan is proudly inducted into the Football Alberta Hall of Fame.

**Bo Jereniuk - M.E. LaZerte High School (Edmonton)**

Bo Jereniuk has been one of Alberta's top innovators during his tenure as the Head Coach at M.E. LaZerte High School from 1982 to 2013. During that time, he created several "firsts" that are commonplace now in making our sport better. He was one of the first to create a parent's group to support the Voyageur football program. Parents ran concessions, did bingos, ran sideline officials, whatever it took to keep their kids' fees low and allow the program to do more innovative things. He also was the first to take an Alberta high school team travelling to the United States for a pre-season game. Whether it was in California, Colorado, or Hawaii, the Voyageurs would get a pre-season like no other and many programs, including Football Alberta's Provincial Teams, would benefit in the future from the template he set regarding team travel. His crowning achievement was the creation of Canada's first and largest pre-season jamboree where high school teams could get some well needed experience in mini games vs. other opponents. At its height it hosted over 40 teams and was re-established at M.E. LaZerte now bearing his name as the Bo Jereniuk Pre-Season Jamboree. He also was an excellent coach taking the Voyageurs to two City Championships in his tenure. A man definitely ahead of his time and high school football in Alberta has benefited from his constantly pushing the envelope making our sport better and more important. We are proud to induct Bo Jereniuk in the Football Alberta Hall of Fame.