

# IHSAA News Release



Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc.  
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## Introducing the IHSAA Ray Crowe Excellence in Leadership Award

To be presented annually for exemplifying sportsmanship, ethical conduct and moral character

In recognition of Ray Crowe's profound life and legacy in Indiana, the IHSAA is proud to announce the formation of the IHSAA Ray Crowe Excellence in Leadership Award in his honor.

The award will recognize individuals who carry on the legacy of Ray Crowe, exemplifying the highest standards of sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and moral character. Candidates will be considered on the merits of their achievements as a high school leader (coach, athletic administrator, etc.), civic contributions, and community impact, including significant and/or long-term contributions to the interscholastic athletic community. This award will acknowledge the accomplishments and meaningful contributions of individuals who are worthy of statewide recognition as examples for others to emulate.

The inaugural award will be presented publicly to the family of Ray Crowe at halftime of the Class 4A Boys Basketball State Championship on Saturday (March 26) at Gainbridge Fieldhouse.

Born and raised on a farm near Franklin, Indiana, in 1915, Ray Crowe was one of 10 children. A standout student-athlete at Whiteland High School, he was a four-year letterman in basketball (twice the leading scorer and team captain), a three-year letterman in baseball, and the only Black player on both teams.

After high school, Crowe attended Indiana Central College (now University of Indianapolis) where he earned a degree in education and lettered in basketball, track and baseball. He graduated in 1939 and worked at International Harvester before starting his career as an educator and coach at Indianapolis Public School 17.

Crowe became an assistant basketball coach at Crispus Attucks High School in 1948 and was appointed head basketball coach in 1950.

During his seven-year tenure as head coach, the Crispus Attucks Flying Tigers won the Indiana state basketball championship two consecutive years (1955 and 1956)—becoming the first all-Black school to win an open state championship in the country, the first Indianapolis team to win the state title, and Indiana's first undefeated state champions. Crowe was also the first Black coach to win a state title.

His teams made tournament appearances every year he coached: the State Finals in 1951, Sectionals in 1952, Semi-States in 1953 and 1954, and State Finals (runners-up) in 1957. His record as head coach was 179-20.



While the team's success brought great fanfare, it did not shield them from the racism and discrimination of the time. Despite facing racial tensions and hostile playing conditions, coach Crowe always emphasized the importance of good sportsmanship and taught his players to remain calm, take the high road, and overcome adversity through discipline and achievement.

Crowe coached numerous Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame inductees, including Oscar Robertson, and was inducted himself in 1968. Following the 1957 season, Crowe served as the school's athletic director for 10 years, during which the school won its third state championship in 1959.

This summer, he will be inducted posthumously into the National High School Hall of Fame, becoming the first Indiana high school basketball coach to receive the honor.

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***About the Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. (IHSAA)***

*The IHSAA is a voluntary, not-for-profit organization that is self-supporting without the use of tax monies. Since its founding in 1903, the Association's mission has been to provide wholesome, educational athletics for the secondary schools of Indiana. Its 407 member high schools - public, institutional, parochial and private – pay no annual membership fee or incur entry fees to play in the Association's tournaments. A state tournament series is conducted annually in 22 sports, 10 for girls, 10 for boys and two co-ed (unified flag football and unified track and field). A 19-person board of directors, elected by member school principals, governs the organization.*