

IHSAA News Release



Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc.
9150 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46260
317-846-6601 ▪ IHSAA.org ▪ IHSAAtv.org ▪ @IHSAA1

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Executive Committee Approves Naming, Renaming Mental Attitude Awards

Honor bestowed on former IHSAA leaders Bobby Cox, Bob Gardner, Phil Gardner

Having spent their careers in service to our state's young people, the IHSAA Executive Committee unanimously approved honoring three retired IHSAA administrators by officially adding their names to various mental attitude awards.

A longtime Indiana tradition in each IHSAA sport, a mental attitude award is annually presented by the Executive Committee to a senior participant in the state finals, nominated by his or her principal and coach, and who has best demonstrated excellence in mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability. The presenting sponsor in each sport also presents a \$1,000 scholarship to the general scholarship fund of the student's school.



Bobby Cox



Bob Gardner



Phil Gardner

During its Thursday morning meeting, the Committee renamed the Class 4A Baseball Mental Attitude Award in honor of former Commissioner Bob Gardner while the Class A Baseball Mental Attitude Award will be named for former Assistant Commissioner Phil Gardner (no relation).

Since 1967, that sport's mental attitude award had been named in honor of L.V. Phillips, who had served as the second IHSAA commissioner from 1945-62. Phillips' name will continue to be on the Class 2A and 3A awards.

Bob Gardner served as IHSAA commissioner from 1995-2000 and spent 15½ years on the administrative staff before joining the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), the national high school organization for athletics and activities. Gardner retired in 2018 having served 18 years on its staff including the last eight years as the organization's Executive Director.

Phil Gardner, retired in 2017 after serving 27 years with the IHSAA. He spent 18 years as a member of its Board of Directors and nine more years as an assistant commissioner where he administered several sports including baseball during that time. Gardner had one of the longest tenures in Association history having served on the Board continuously from 1990-2008. He was elected president of that group in 1995-96 and also elected chairman of the Executive Committee in 1999-00 and 2002-03.

The Executive Committee also unanimously approved the establishment of a mental attitude award for Unified Flag Football and Unified Track & Field, both of which are part of the Champions Together initiative, a partnership with Special Olympics Indiana. The two co-ed sports allow students with and without intellectual disabilities to compete together for their school in a team setting.

Those two awards were named in honor of recently retired commissioner Bobby Cox, who embraced the Champions Together project and led to the establishment of both as the newest IHSAA sports – Unified Track & Field (2014) and Unified Flag Football (2018). Both awards will officially be known as the "Bobby Cox Spirit of Unified Mental Attitude Award".

The award will first be presented at the conclusion of the Unified Flag Football State Finals on Oct. 17 at Grand Park in Westfield. It will be a joint award presented to a Unified Athlete as well as a Unified Partner Athlete from the same school as nominated by their school principal and coach.

Cox completed a 41-year career in education last July having first served as an assistant commissioner beginning in 2000 and then ended his tenure after nine years in his role as the IHSAA's eighth commissioner.

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 410 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 track and field). A 19-person board of directors, elected by member school principals, governs the organization.