

Akron Beacon Journal

FOOTBALL

Football icon Ara Parseghian leads APS Athletics Hall of Fame Class



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Key Points

The APS Athletics Hall of Fame Class announced its 2026 class on Thursday.

Seven of the 10 inductees have football attached to their high school sports legacies.

The Akron Public Schools Athletics Hall of Fame is flexing its football muscle with its Class of 2026.

Seven of the 10 inductees have football attached to their high school sports legacies. The group includes former NFL players [Jay Brophy](#) (Buchtel) and [Mike Fox](#) (North) as well as College Football Hall of Famer [Ara Parseghian](#) (South).

Here is the entire class [the APS Athletics Hall of Fame](#) announced on Thursday, July 9:

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Akron Public School Athletics Hall of Fame reveals Class of 2026

Jay Brophy, Buchtel (football): Brophy played linebacker for the University of Miami, winning a national title with the 1983 Hurricanes, and logged four seasons in the NFL, three with the Miami Dolphins and one with the New York Jets. The Dolphins drafted him in the second round (No. 53 overall) in 1984,

and he started for them in Super Bowl XIX on Jan. 20, 1985, when they lost to the San Francisco 49ers.

Ara Parseghian, South (football): The late Parseghian played halfback for the Great Lakes Naval Station (1945), Miami University (1946-47) and the Browns (1948-49 — Cleveland won the AAFC championship in both seasons) before becoming a legendary college coach who went 170-58-6 in 24 seasons combined at Miami University (1951-55), Northwestern (1956-63) and Notre Dame (1964-74). He won two national titles with Notre Dame (1966 and 1973) and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

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Fred Gissendaner Sr., Buchtel (football, track and field): Gissendaner won the city of Akron and City Series scoring titles as a Buchtel senior halfback in 1961 and City Series titles in the pole vault in all three of his high school track and field seasons. He played football and pole vaulted at Kent State University and later played for the Akron Vulcans of the Continental Football League.

Bud Bond, Garfield (football): The late Robert "Bud" Bond played center and linebacker, lettering in all four of his seasons (1952-55) with Ohio State. Bond helped the Buckeyes claim the 1954 national title and Big Ten championships in 1954 and 1955. As a Garfield star, he became the first Beacon Journal football player of the year in 1951.

Duane Bland, Buchtel (football): Bland was a standout linebacker at Buchtel in the 1970s who played defensive back at Morehead State University. Like Brophy, Bland became a local high school football coach after his playing days.

Mike Fox, North (football): Fox played defensive line in the NFL for nine seasons (1990-98), five with the New York Giants and four with the Carolina

Panthers. As a rookie second-round draft pick (No. 51 overall) out of West Virginia University, Fox won Super Bowl XXV with the 1990 Giants, who defeated the Buffalo Bulls 20-19 for the title on Jan. 27, 1991.

Elwood Woodling, East (swimming, track and field): As a swimming sensation, the late Woodling captured the national title in the junior mile (24 minutes, 4.8 seconds) in 1935, earning a spot on the All-American prep team. He was an All-American swimmer from 1938-40 at Ohio State whose shot at the 1940 Olympics never materialized because World War II forced the games to be canceled. His brother, Gene Woodling, was a longtime MLB player who won five World Series (1949-53) with the New York Yankees.

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John Scott, Kenmore (Buchtel track and field coach): Scott was the head coach of Buchtel cross country (boys 29 years, girls 22 years) and track (girls 23 years, boys 22 years). Scott led the Buchtel boys to four team state titles (outdoor Division I in 1996 and Division II in 2006; indoor Division II-III in 2005 and 2006) and the Buchtel girls to three team state championships (outdoor Division II in 2007; indoor Division II-III in 2005 and 2007).

Tina Wallace, Garfield (Ellet volleyball coach): Wallace coached volleyball and girls basketball at Ellet for more than three decades. In 2014, Wallace won the the Clem Caraboolad Memorial Coach of the Year award from the Akron Beacon Journal and the Touchdown Club of Greater Akron.

Jerry Bitong, North (football, wrestling): Bitong was a standout defensive back at North and Malone College, but he could do much more, including excel as a return man. As a North senior in 1992, he made the Associated Press Division II All-Ohio football team with seven interceptions and 1,276 all-purpose yards.

Akron Public Schools Athletics Hall of Fame continues with new leadership

The Akron Public Schools Athletics Hall of Fame launched in 2022 under former district athletic directors [Joe Vassalotti](#) and [Ron Linger](#), both of whom have since retired.

New APS athletics director [Tom McKinnon](#) has committed to continuing the APS Athletics Hall of Fame with its fifth class. Vassalotti and Linger remain involved with the selection of inductees.

Akron City Series history: [Thanksgiving Day Championship provides high school football nostalgia](#)

APS Athletics Hall of Fame 2026 induction banquet info

The APS Athletics Hall of Fame induction banquet is scheduled to be held at 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 19, at Guy's Party Center (500 E. Waterloo Road, Akron).

The APS Athletics Hall of Fame also plans to continue its summertime tradition of featuring inductees at RubberDucks games at 7 17 Credit Union Park, formerly Canal Park. Soon-to-be hall of famers are scheduled to throw out ceremonial first pitches prior to a game at 1:05 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 23, against the Harrisburg Senators.

APS will announce additional ticket and scheduling information in the coming weeks.

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