

Former Alton/Jersey Football Coach Dave Jacobs Is 2021 IHSFCA HOF Ray Eliot Award Winner

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE - Dave Jacobs is culminating his highly successful career as a high school football coach with the prestigious Ray Eliot Award. The award is given to an individual each year for their involvement with and service to the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association.

Jacobs was a 2019 IHSFCA Hall of Fame Inductee as a Career High School Football Coach.

Jacobs said he was extremely appreciative of both honors, but Ray Eliot Award is a great way to finish his career as a high school educator/coach. He said he is retiring at the end of this school year from the Alton School District. Jacobs was the Alton High offensive coordinator until this season.

Jacobs said the Ray Eliot honor is probably the pinnacle of his coaching career.

“Not very many people get those type of awards at the end of a career,” he said. “It is a huge blessing and I see it by the grace of God. I have had many highs and lows, but to culminate my career like this is just a witness to God’s love.”

The Ray Eliot honor is named after the former Illinois football coach and is given annually to an individual for involvement with and service to the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association. This award does not have to be given every year.

Ray Eliot was an American football and baseball player, coach and college athletics administrator. He was the head football coach at Illinois College from 1934 to 1936 and at the University of Illinois from 1942 to 1959. He was also head baseball coach at Illinois College from 1933 to 1937. He was nicknamed "Mr. Illini." He played as a guard on the Illini football team in 1930 and 1931. The Illinois High School Football Coaches Association remembers Eliot each year with its Ray Eliot Award.

Jacobs continued: “I am really thankful to be able to finish my high school career here at Alton School District,” he said. “I am very thankful for my opportunity to coach with Eric Dickerson and the other coaches at Alton and help the program. The coaches here are dear friends of mine. I really have enjoyed the kids here. They have been fun to coach and are great kids. Many of the kids are now playing in college that we had from the start here in Alton. The administration in Alton has been great to work with.”

Jacobs said the Alton School District has placed considerable resources into the athletic program and that includes \$28,000 in a weight-room facility that he helped orchestrate the training. Funds have also been invested on new gymnasiums and the beautiful new Public School Stadium turf and track.

“There is excitement here in Alton with the athletic program,” he said. “Coach Dickerson has done an excellent job.”

Coach Jacobs led the Jersey Panthers (2011-2015) to three playoff appearances and an MVC Championship with an undefeated regular season in 2012 (Alton Telegraph Large School Coach of the Year/WCIFCA Coach of the Year). Jacobs also led Champaign Central HS football between 2005 and 2009, compiling a 21-27 record, two Class 5A playoff appearances, and one Class 6A postseason berth. Jacobs also coached Hoopeston Area/Schlarman.

He coached Academy/Armstrong-Potomac football during the 2016 season. Jacobs is best recognized as being the first-ever head football coach at Rochester High School that started football in 1995 and led the program to five straight playoff appearances from

2000-2005 before departing for Champaign Central. Since then, the Rochester football team has won eight of the last 10 IHSA State Championships under Derek Leonard.

Coach Jacobs is also recognized for his first head football coaching job at New Berlin High School (1989-90) where he helped resurrect a losing program. He spent two years at Glenwood High School as an assistant while getting his master's degree at Illinois State University. Following Glenwood, Jacobs was the head football coach at Illiopolis for two years and put back-to-back winning seasons there in 1993 and 1994. Jacobs served as a volunteer assistant coach at the University of Illinois with Coach Ron Zook in 2010 before coming to Jersey.

Coach Jacobs is retiring from teaching at Alton High School in May where he with Coach Dickerson and the rest of the coaching staff has helped AHS to back-to-back 7A playoff appearances, including a second-round appearance while breaking the school's single-season scoring record in 2017 as offensive coordinator.

Coach Jacobs is currently the chairman of the Illinois Coaches Association Shrine All-Star Football Game. During the past six years, Jacobs has helped raise over \$135,000 for Shriner's Children's Hospital. He is also the IHSFCA Co-Clinic Director and was responsible for getting over 130 speakers for the first-ever IHSFCA Virtual Clinic in December that raised over \$36,000 for the association. He is currently a trustee with the IHSFCA.

Other accomplishments for Jacobs are:

Frank Glazier/Mega Clinic "A" Team Speaker (Minneapolis, Memphis, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, Indianapolis, Cleveland 2005-2006, Phoenix-Cincinnati 2010- San Jose 2011, Northwest All Sports Clinic Presenter, Seattle 2011) Nebraska Coaches Association All-Sports Clinic Presenter July 2014

18 DVD's published with Coaches Choice; Published Book (Gridiron Gospel)
Guest Coach Germany-Leipzig Lions - Summer 2014
Fellowship of Christian Athletes Banquet and Event Speaker

The 2021 Hall of Fame induction ceremony is slated for June at Illinois Wesleyan's Shirk Center, its occurrence depends on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 version of this event still hasn't happened and is currently scheduled for May 8th in Champaign.

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)