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**ASAA NAMES CLASS OF 2016
ALASKA HIGH SCHOOL
HALL OF FAME**

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska School Activities Association announces the Class of 2016 Alaska High School Hall of Fame. Eight individuals will be inducted into the Hall of Fame during a ceremony on Sunday, May 1, 2016, at 4:00 PM, at the Hilton Anchorage Hotel. The public is invited to attend this ceremony.

The Hall of Fame was established to identify and honor, in a permanent manner, individuals who exhibited high ethical standards and integrity while achieving excellence in high school athletics and activities, as well as others who have distinguished themselves by virtue of exemplary contributions to the advancement of interscholastic athletics and activities in the State of Alaska.

Categories include student athlete and students who participated in fine art and academic activities. Other categories include coaches, administrators, advisors/directors, officials/adjudicators and major contributors.

For more information, contact Sandi Wagner, at 907.375.4400 or log onto the Hall of Fame website (ASAA) <http://alaskahalloffame.org> for more information about each inductee.

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2016 ALASKA HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

CHAD BENTZ

(Athlete – Juneau-Douglas High School – Baseball & Football)

No Alaska baseball player did more with less than Chad Bentz of Juneau-Douglas. He made history in Major League Baseball by becoming the second pitcher, after Jim Abbott, to play in the big leagues after being born without one of his hands. “I played baseball when I was younger, and got made fun of,” Bentz said in 2004. “I didn’t like going because all they did was make fun of me. So I didn’t play anymore. Then I saw Jim Abbott. He gave me the will to at least try playing again.” Bentz is Alaska’s role model. The 6-foot-2, southpaw pitched in 40 career MLB games from 2004 to 2005, more than any other player from Alaska. He’s the only Alaskan with a base hit in the big leagues. During his high school career he was a 3-sport athlete earning varsity letters in football, baseball and track. He made all state teams in football and was Gatorade Player of the year in Baseball. Currently, Chad has returned to Juneau and is the athletic director at Juneau-Douglas High School. He is giving back to the young people of the community and is certainly a positive role model.

CASEY FLAIR

(Athlete – East Anchorage High School – Football)

A groundbreaking wide receiver for East Anchorage in the early 2000’s, Casey Flair set the standard for his position his junior and senior seasons. He set consecutive state records for receptions and yards in 2002 (55-1,139) and 2003 (59-1,237) during a run first era. In 2003 he led East to a state championship and was voted Alaska Player of the Year. In addition, he earned first team wide receiver in 2002 and 2003. He also competed at state in track and field in high jump and sprint relays. Flair walked on at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and left as one of the top receivers in school history. His 47 games played were the most by any UNLV player and caught at least one pass in every one of them, which shattered the previous record. His name remains etched in the school’s record book, with Flair ranking #2 with 202 career receptions and #7 with 2,380 career receiving yards. Casey was also recognized with the Outstanding Character Award.

IAN PITZMAN

(Athlete – Homer High School – Wrestling)

One of the true tactical, tough guys on the wrestling mat, Homer’s Ian Pitzman dominated his weight class in 1985 and 1986 with two state titles and a nearly unblemished record. Pitzman was the total package – speed, strength and supreme intensity. His school record for consecutive wins [44] stood for 27 years. As a senior, he won almost every one of his matches at 191 pounds by pin or technical fall. He accumulated 11 letters, won a region 110-meter hurdles title and was captain of the Homer football team. He was a three-sport letterman, wrestling, football and track. Wrestling, however, was his bread and butter. At Clackamas Community College in Oregon, Pitzman pinned a defending national champion in his college debut. His career ended in 1988 due to injury, robbing the sport of one its true champions. Ian has continued to demonstrate his willingness to give back to the community. Ian is a parent of 7 children, coaches wrestling and hockey and is a leader in the Homer fishing community.

JED WADE

(Athlete – Wasilla High School – Wrestling)

One of only nine wrestlers in Alaska history to win four state titles, Jed Wade of Wasilla won 92 of 93 matches over his junior and senior seasons and compiled a career mark of 170-11. In 2004, he was named Alaska's Prep Athlete of the Year and a Wendy's High School Heisman. He won the 171-pound state title as a freshman before bumping up to 189 for the final three. Wade was just the second Alaskan to win his weight class at the prestigious Reno Tournament of Champions, earning him All-America recognition. He was ranked as high as second nationally at 215 and ended the 2004 season ranked third at 189. Wade also lettered in football and soccer. He has been inducted into the Alaska Wrestling Hall of Fame. Wade was an exemplary student athlete and earned a scholarship to Columbia University of the Ivy League. He currently is coaching in Anchorage and Wasilla.

VICTOR BARRANCO

(Activity Participant – North Pole High School – Music)

One of the greatest musicians from Alaska, trombone player Victor Barranco, got his start at North Pole, where he was a member of All-State Band from 1999 to 2001 and the All Northwest Honor Orchestra in 2000. He was also a four-year letterman in cross-country skiing and track and field. After high school, Barranco earned his Master of Performance degree from the University of North Texas. In 2009 he joined the U.S. Army Band and traveled the country not only performing but also appearing as an adjudicator, clinician and soloist at high school and college music conventions, including the University of Alaska Fairbanks Jazz Festival. Barranco has toured with the national Broadway production of 'Fiddler of the Roof' and performed with Grammy winning artists such as Tony Bennett, Aretha Franklin, Mariah Carey and Lady Gaga. Barranco always set high goals for himself. He demonstrated a work ethic and dedication that allowed him to achieve his goals. He had a fantastic attitude and was an outstanding school leader. He graduated in the top 10% of his class and was an exceptional student.

DON ERICKSON

(Coach – Covenant High School – Basketball)

As boy's basketball coach of tiny Covenant in Unalakleet, Don Erickson nearly orchestrated one of the greatest upsets in Alaska high school hoops history. It didn't happen as No. 1 Dimond escaped with a 52-50 victory after scoring the game-winning basket with six seconds to play. But the David vs. Goliath playoff game defined the anything-can-happen in state championships. Erickson coached at Covenant from 1965 to 1974 and posted a remarkable 87-15 record with two Class B titles over a four-year span [1970-73]. Off the court, Erickson was an active member of the community serving as a pastor, foster parent and an official. As dorm parents, Don and Kathy opened their front door to children in need of a home. Erickson was also a recipient of the state's Outstanding Young Educator award. Don passed away in 1986 at the young age of 49 and left a legacy of love for young people behind.

DAVE DIRKSEN

(Administrator – Annette Island & Wrangell School Districts)

Administrator Dave Dirksen worked for 20 years for the Wrangell City and Annette Island [Metlakatla] school districts. He retired in 2002. In 1993, he was selected Alaska Principal of the Year and National Distinguished Principal of the Year by the U.S. Department of Education. Dirksen was elected president of the Alaska School Activities Association Board of Directors in 1996 and served through 2002, leaving a legacy of significant growth and development of the state football and hockey playoffs, the evolution of the state basketball tournaments into March Madness Alaska, adoption of state baseball and soccer tournaments and expansion of state softball tournament. He was instrumental in adoption of the Coach's Education program. He was also a highly respected wrestling official for 30 years and won the Region V Official of the Year award. Dave is best known for his ability to guide the ASAA Board in reaching consensus on controversial issues across the state. Dave is well deserving of recognition as a Hall of Fame member.

GARY MATTHEWS

(Administrator – ASAA & Haines School District)

As executive director of the Alaska School Activities Association for 21 years, Gary Matthews guided ASAA out of financial distress and put into place policy and procedures that provided stability to the organization. Under his leadership the number of activities offered at the state level increased, home school students were allowed access and Title IX opportunities for female students improved. In addition, Matthews established the Alaska High School Hall of Fame and instituted the Play for Keeps program to address tobacco, alcohol and drug problems of Alaska's teenagers. He faced complex problems without hesitation and was able to bring closure despite strong, divergent viewpoints. Gary always put students first and that was the guiding principal of his tenure. Before joining ASAA, Matthews spent 1968 to 1993 at Haines, first as a music teacher and then principal. He wrote the school's fight song and was influential in creating the Region V Music Festival, which is still the state's largest gathering of music students.