

AHSAAA Hall of Fame Honors Athletic Administration Professionals

AHSAAA HALL OF FAME – CLASS OF 2009



Ronnie Higgins



Don Hubbard



Helen Parker



Richard "Bubba" Payton

Ronnie Higgins

Ronnie Higgins was born on February 20, 1945, to Roland and Clora Higgins in Little Rock. He and his sister Alinda attended Fuller High School in Sweet Home, Arkansas, where he starred in football, basketball and track, earning all-district honors in football both his junior and senior years. Growing up, Ronnie spent most summers playing baseball at Lamar Porter field in Little Rock from pony league all the way through American Legion.

After graduating from Fuller, Ronnie attended Arkansas Tech at Russellville where he was a four year letterman in both football and baseball. He made All-AIC all four years in baseball and his senior year as a defensive back in football. He was a member of the AIC Championship football team in 1964.

After graduating from Tech in 1967, Ronnie took his first coaching job in DeValls Bluff with Larry Gershner. There he served as head junior high football coach and assistant football and track coach for the high school. After two years he moved on to Morrilton to assist in football under Doyme Davis and Wylie Cox and to become the head track coach. While at Morrilton, Ronnie completed his Master of Science in Physical Education at the University of Central Arkansas.

By 1971 Ronnie had moved on once again to Helena-West Helena Central to become defensive coordinator for Head Coach Wallace Porter. When Wallace left for a job at Henderson State, Ronnie was elevated to head coach and Athletic Director, a position he would hold for four years before moving once again, this time to become defensive coordinator for Bill Reed at Jacksonville High School. That year Jacksonville won the state football

championship. Ronnie became their assistant principal in 1978 after earning his Administrator's Certificate from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

In 1983 Ronnie made his last move, becoming defensive coordinator for the football team and head coach for the fledgling baseball program at North Pulaski High School in Jacksonville. There he built the baseball program to a powerhouse earning state tournament berths 5 times over the next 7 years. It was then that Ronnie moved full time into administration becoming the Athletic Director and Director of Student Services and Health and Physical Education for Pulaski County Special School District that served six high schools that surrounded the Little Rock and North Little Rock School Districts. In his new job Ronnie would truly become the "Arkansas Traveler" following his teams as they competed from Siloam Springs to West Memphis to Monticello and Harrison.

During his years as Athletic Director Ronnie chaired several important committees for the Pulaski County School District as well as serving ten years on the board of AHPERD, including one year as president. He was also active on the state level serving on AAA committees and working with the Coaches Association's High School All-Star week. In 1997 he was named Athletic Director of the year for the state.

Ronnie is now retired and enjoying life in Jacksonville with his wife Cindy. He has two children, Ron Higgins and Karyn Adams and one grandchild, Kaden Higgins. He also has three stepchildren, Danielle Fejfar, Tate Fejfar and Brittany Coffey. Ronnie remains active in his community serving on the Senior Center and Parks and Recreation boards and the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce. Each summer you can find him in the

trenches during summer All-Star week in Fayetteville still working to give the kids of Arkansas one last great high

school athletic experience.

Don Hubbard

Don Gene Hubbard was born June 13, 1938, in De Queen, Arkansas, to Carl and Gracie Hubbard. He and his brother James enjoyed the active involvement of their parents in their young lives and throughout their careers. As a student at De Queen High School Don was a letterman in football, basketball and track as well as being a member of the Leopard band. Don's coach and mentor was Coach Delwin Ross who had a tremendous influence on his decision to enter the coaching profession. Don graduated in 1956, as the Salutatorian of his graduating class.

After high school Don attended Henderson State Teacher's College where he played football for coach Duke Wells. Don earned his Bachelor's degree from Henderson and then served six months in the Army at Fort Gordon, Georgia, before beginning his first coaching job at Bearden High School. At Bearden he not only assisted Dude Hensley in football, but also served as head basketball and track coach. Don had the distinction of starting the girl's basketball program in Bearden.

In 1963 Don returned to his hometown as head football and track coach taking with him his winning ways. In his four years at De Queen he brought home two district football and track championships before moving on to his last stop, Magnolia. Over the next decade at Magnolia Don's teams would win a conference track championship, four conference football championships and three state football championships, running the table with undefeated football teams in both 1968 and 1972. He was promoted to School Plant Manager and Athletic Director in 1970 and served the Magnolia School District in that capacity for 30 years. Don also worked with the Magnolia tennis program for several years and continued to do so after retirement.

Helen Parker

Helen Parker was born in Okolona, on March 18, 1929, the daughter of Tom and Belle Park and sister to Tom Jr. and Reida. Helen's father Tom was a teacher and coach so she arrived at her "calling" naturally. She loved sports, all sports, playing basketball and cheerleading first at Okolona, then at White Hall her 10th and 11th grade years and finally at Glendale her senior year.

After graduation from Glendale High she attended Henderson State College for two summers and a fall session. Henderson did not have women's athletics at that time, but Helen participated in their intramural

Don's impact on athletics in Magnolia and Southern Arkansas was tremendous. He started the conference All Sports Trophy Program for both boys and girls, and the Male and Female Athlete of the Year Awards for Magnolia. A requirement for this award was multiple sport participation. Don believed deeply that athletes should be well rounded and should participate not only for themselves, but also as ambassadors for Magnolia Schools. Even with all of his personal accomplishments, Don credits his 30 year assistant, Alma Jean Tuberville as equally important in their establishment of one of the most effective and emulated athletic departments in the state.

Over his career, Don was the recipient of many awards. He was on the AHSCA All-Star coaching staff 5 times and served as head coach in 1966. He was the AHSCA Football Coach of the Year in 1968 and was twice named the Arkansas Athletic Director of the year in 1986 and 1990. Don was honored by the city of Magnolia when September 21, 2007, was proclaimed Don Hubbard Day.

Don married Jennifer Wylie Hubbard in 1978 and is father to Melissa Hubbard Scott of Magnolia and Mike and Dan Hubbard both of Warren. He has 2 grandsons, Blake Watson of Magnolia and Jon Hubbard of Warren. In his retirement, Don enjoys family, fishing and of course, attending athletic events at Magnolia where he is a regular fixture on football Friday nights having missed but one game in 40 years.

Don's athletic legacy as a coach, an athletic director and mentor to coaches and athletes alike will influence the quality of athletics in Arkansas forever.

program to feed her competitive spirit. It was there that she met and married Buddy Parker or as she tells it, just added "er" to her last name. Buddy had just accepted a coaching position at Ashdown, so in August of 1947 Helen and Buddy boarded a bus with their two suitcases and headed to their first and last stop on the coaching trail.

At Ashdown she worked as a substitute teacher and then a health and PE teacher for 4th, 5th and 6th grades while she completed her BSE degree at Texarkana College and the University of Arkansas during the summers. During those years she would walk over to the high

school and help Buddy with the high school girl's basketball team. Their house was a home away from home for the girl basketball players and their newly purchased car was the team vehicle for rides home from practices and games. It took Helen just two years to land the state basketball runner-up trophy and in another 8 seasons she won the first of her 5 state basketball championships. She would later add volleyball to that list of state titles. By measure of just her coaching successes, Helen Parker was a Hall of Famer, but she had bigger fish to fry.

Many small schools such as Ashdown didn't have athletic directors, but Helen learned to perform the duties of that role from her husband and mentor Buddy Parker. She worked with Buddy carrying out those tasks for six years and then "just continued" doing it all for the rest of her career – and what a career it was.

By the late 60's Helen was discussing with her fellow girl's basketball coaches the need for girls to have more athletic opportunities. They wanted an All-Star game for girls like the boys were playing in Little Rock each summer and for the Activities Association to sanction more sports for girls. On April 4, 1970, an investigative committee of seven coaches appointed by J.M. "Johnnie" Burnett Executive Director of the AAA, met for the first time in the Ashdown High School library with Helen Parker as chair. Two months later this same group

became the Arkansas High School Girls Athletic Committee and would present a proposal to the AAA Board to institute a Girl's All-Star basketball game and to add both girl's tennis and golf as AAA sanctioned sports. The passing of that proposal by the AAA in November of that year became the watershed event that would usher in a new era of opportunities for the girls of Arkansas that flourishes still today.

Helen has been honored as the state's Outstanding Volleyball Coach and the Outstanding Coach in Arkansas High School Girls Athletics. She has received the National Federation's Distinguished Service Award and the coveted Curtis King Award from the Arkansas High School Coaches Association. She has been named to the Arkansas High School Coaches Hall of Fame and the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame and has been honored by her adopted home town with the renaming of the Ashdown High School Gym to "Parker Gym". And the list goes on.

Today Helen still resides in Ashdown and continues her active involvement in church and community activities. The profound effects of her lifetime of giving to her kids, her town and her state cannot be overstated, and her contributions to our profession will echo far into the future.

Bubba Payton

Richard "Bubba" Payton was born in Little Rock on July 26, 1945, to Joe and Susie Payton. He and his brother Ronnie were raised in a family that loved sports. In fact his mother Susie was inducted into the State Women's Bowling Hall of Fame. Bubba grew up an overachiever and an all-around outstanding young man as evidenced by the fact that he was recognized as National Boys Club Boy of the Year runner up in 1959. He graduated from Hot Springs High School in 1963 and from Arkansas Tech with his Bachelors of Education in 1967.

Osceola was his first coaching stop out of Tech where he took over the reins as junior high basketball coach and assistant in football. From there he moved on to Manila to serve in the same capacities and to add golf and track to his resume. While at Manila he won his first state championship in the sport of golf. It was in 1973 that he became Manila's head senior high basketball coach. His success that year prompted his fellow league coaches to nominate him as an All-Star coach from their district. In 1976 Bubba moved back to Hot Springs to stay, first as the head junior high basketball coach, high school golf coach and assistant high school football coach at Lakeside. That school year he not only won the conference junior high basketball championship, but he

also added his 2nd state championship in Golf. He moved over to Lake Hamilton in 1978 to become the head high school basketball coach and to continue coaching golf and football. Bubba added tennis to his coaching duties from 1980 until 1985 when he was named Lake Hamilton's Athletic Director.

It is obvious that Athletic Directing was Bubba's calling when you look at the tremendous accomplishments of his program during his 22 year tenure. Over that period Lake Hamilton won 3 All-Sports State Championships, 18 State Championships and had 24 State runners-up. He built new facilities for softball and baseball, put in the state's first Mondo track and resurfaced the football field. Bubba was responsible for the innovative idea of using Oaklawn Park as the setting for the state cross country championships.

Among Bubba's significant contributions to the profession of Athletic Administration are his service as the secretary, vice-president and president of the AHSAAA from 1986 to 1993, and his work as hospitality chair from 1996 to 2007. He also represented Arkansas as a delegate to the NIAAA National Convention in 1992 and 1993 and served as moderator at the NIAAA National Conference in 2004. For his service Bubba has received the State

Award of Merit and was selected the Arkansas Athletic Director of the Year in 2003-2004.

Bubba's wife is Patty. They have a son, Brandon and two daughters, Tracey Halligan and Lisa Conly. Patty and

Bubba are proud grandparents to Meagan and Shea Halligan, Skyler Hebert and Stormie Smith. In his retirement Bubba continues to enjoy his family, his church and his community.