



Record-setting group to comprise 2025 NJSIAA Hall of Fame class

January 17, 2025

NJSIAA is pleased to announce the seven outstanding individuals who have been selected to comprise the 2025 induction class for the NJSIAA Hall of Fame. The class, consisting of five athletes and two coaches, will be honored during a ceremony on Sunday, March 23rd, at the Westin at Forrestal Village in Princeton. In addition, NJSIAA will honor one individual with its annual Award of Honor and recognize 4 long-time contributors with a Service Award at the ceremony - additional details will be forthcoming.

The 2025 Hall of Fame class will be the 27th class since the NJSIAA Hall of Fame was established in 1996. The inductees were determined by a statewide voting panel, after a screening committee narrowed nominees to a group of finalists.

Here are the athletes in this year's class:

Anthony Ashnault (South Plainfield HS Class of 2013)

One of New Jersey's most accomplished all-time scholastic athletes in any sport, he achieved unparalleled success in wrestling. He was an undefeated (170-0) four-time state champion, winning his titles in four different weight classes (103, 112, 126 and 138). He was New Jersey's third four-time state winner, but the first to do so undefeated. His accomplishments extended to Rutgers University, culminating in an NCAA championship in the 149-pound weight class in 2019 that completed a 32-0 season and a distinguished 124-19 career as a four-time college All-American.

Josh Evans (Irvington HS Class of 2009)

A standout in football and track & field, he was an All-State quarterback after passing for nearly 1,800 yards and rushing for over 1,300 as a senior. He was also a standout safety. In track, he was an indoor and outdoor Group 4 and Meet of Champions hurdles champion. He played college football at the University of Florida, was a sixth-round draft pick by the Jacksonville Jaguars in 2013. He played several years with Jacksonville.

Carol Lewis (Willingboro HS Class of 1981)

Part of an outstanding athletics family that includes her brother Carl (a 2006 Hall of Fame inductee), she won four straight Meet of Champions long jump titles from 1978 through '81, as well as two championships in the 100m high hurdles. Along the way, she qualified for the Olympics as a long jumper in 1980. At the University of Houston, she won multiple NCAA long jump championships, later becoming a United States champion, and qualified for two more Olympics, in 1984 and '88.

Francesca Russo (Wayne Valley HS Class of 2014)

A two-time state Fencer of the Year at Wayne Valley, the sabre specialist graduated as the first four-time state champion in state history. She also competed globally during those years, and helped the United States win the world championship at the Junior World Championship in 2013. She was also a two-time NCAA sabre champion at Notre Dame, and competed in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Nick Vena (Morristown HS Class of 2011)

Arguably the most dominant male track & field athlete in state history, Vena's dominance in the shot put was on another level. Not only did he rule the event for four years, he continually broke his own records in doing so. Vena had 96 career throws over 70 feet. Only one athlete from New Jersey had thrown that far. He won a total of nine Meet of Champions titles - four each in the indoor and outdoor shot put, and one in the discus. He was later a collegiate All-America at the University of Georgia.

The following coaches will be honored:

Ken Frank (Toms River South baseball)

He retired last May after 47 years as head coach of the TRS program. He departed as the winningest baseball coach in state history, with a 934-356 record. His teams won five NJSIAA group championships, 10 sectional championships, 12 Ocean County Tournament championships, seven Shore Conference Tournament titles and 22 Shore Conference divisional crowns.

Deanna Knobloch (Moorestown girls lacrosse)

She retired in 2018 as the winningest girls lacrosse in state history, and with one of the greatest win percentages of any coach in state high school sports history. Her 27-year record was 580-46-4, with 15 state championships and seven Tournament of Champions titles. At one point, Moorestown 228 consecutive games against in-state competition.

Award of Honor – Senator Paul A. Sarlo – Senate Deputy Majority Leader – District 36 – Executive Committee

Service Award – Joe Bollendorf, Past-President – Former Superintendent – Washington Township High School and Moorestown High School

Service Award – Tom Gambino, Controversies Committee – Immaculata High School Athletic Director

Service Award – Robert Kellert, MileSplit NJ

Service Award – Christina Emrich, Sports Medical Advisory Committee – Red Bank Regional High School – Athletic Trainer/Assistant Athletic Director