



Detroit Lions Football Education Division

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For Immediate Release

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JIM AHERN OF LANSING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL NAMED 2019 DETROIT LIONS/FARM BUREAU INSURANCE OF MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL COACH OF THE YEAR

Detroit, MI—Jim Ahern of Lansing Catholic High School has been selected as the 2019 Detroit Lions/Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan High School Football Coach of the Year. Ahern led his Cougars to a 31-17 comeback victory over Almont on November 30 to win the Division 5 Michigan High School Football State Championship. This is Lansing Catholic's first Michigan Football State Championship since 1985 and Ahern's first as a head coach. The Cougars, from the Capital Area Activities Conference, finished with a 13-1 record, outscoring their opponents 549-189.

Ahern has just concluded his 46th year as a football coach and 11th season as head coach at Lansing Catholic. Ahern has directed the Cougars to the playoffs in all 11 seasons while reaching the Division 5 state finals in both 2011 and 2014. He has a 104-24 (81.3%) record at Lansing Catholic.

Ahern's first high school head coaching position was at Gobles High School from 1969-1971 followed by 32 years as head coach at Ithaca High School from 1972-2003, where he became one of the first coaches in the state to employ the spread offense. Ahern was a Detroit Lions High School Football Coach of the Week while at Ithaca during Week 7 of the 2001 season.

With this season's playoff run, Ahern has become the 11th coach in state history to eclipse the 300-victory plateau, having compiled a 301-152-6 career record (65.6%). Ahern was inducted into the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1996.

High School Football Coach of the Week/Year Program

Each week throughout the nine-week high school football regular season and at the conclusion of the Michigan High School Football State Championships, one coach that best demonstrates success on and off the field, develops players' character, discipline, and football skill in addition to emphasizing player health and safety in their program, will be recognized for his commitment to the team, school, and community. The winner is selected by a panel of high school football media members—**Mick McCabe (Detroit Free Press), Hugh Bernreuter (Saginaw News), Bret Bakita (WOOD Radio-106.9 FM, ESPN 96.1 FM-Fox 17/Grand Rapids), James Cook (Traverse City Record-Eagle) and Scott DeCamp (MLive-Muskegon Chronicle)**. Ahern was selected as Coach of the Year by the votes of the aforementioned media members, as well as one vote from the public online voting at DetroitLions.com/coachoftheyear.

Each winning coach during the regular season received a \$2,000 donation to his school's football program and a Gatorade performance package. Weekly winners are honored in a halftime ceremony during the Detroit Lions-Tampa Bay Buccaneers game on December 15. During the ceremony, the Lions will also recognize Ahern as the Detroit Lions/Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan High School Football Coach of the Year. Ahern will receive a \$4,000 donation to his school's football program, a Gatorade performance package and will be honored as the Detroit Lions nominee for the Don Shula NFL High School Football Coach of the Year. Ahern will be invited to the 2020 NFL Pro Bowl in Orlando, FL where the winner of the Don Shula NFL High School Football Coach of the Year will be announced.

This season's program has awarded \$22,000 to aid the development and promotion of high school football in the state of Michigan, thanks to contributions from the Detroit Lions, the NFL Foundation, presenting partner, Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan and associate partner, Gatorade.



Concluding its' 23rd year, the Detroit Lions High School Coach of the Week/Year program has awarded \$455,000 to high school football programs throughout the state of Michigan.

All-Time Coach of the Year recipients:

1997-John Herrington, Farmington Hills Harrison, **1998-Thomas Mach**, Detroit Catholic Central, **1999-Don Durrett**, Saginaw, **2000-Herb Brogan**, Jackson Lumen Christi, **2001-John Schwartz**, Mendon, **2002-Mike Boyd**, Waterford Our Lady of the Lakes, **2003-Scot Shaw**, Three Rivers, **2004-Noel Dean**, Lowell, **2005-Jack Pratt**, Flint Powers, **2006-Tony Annese**, Muskegon, **2007-Jim Reynolds**, Detroit King, **2008-Peter Stuursma**, East Grand Rapids, **2009-Rich Hulkow**, Marshall, **2010-Chris Bell**, Lake Orion, **2011-Thomas Wilcher**, Detroit Cass Tech, **2012-Terry Hessbrook**, Ithaca, **2013-Kurt Richardson**, Clarkston, **2014-Dan Rohn**, Grand Rapids West Catholic, **2015-John Shillito**, Zeeland West, **2016-Elliot Uzelac**, Benton Harbor, **2017-Mike Giannone**, Warren De La Salle, **2018-Rick Bailey**, Reading, **2019-Jim Ahern**, Lansing Catholic