



# Detroit Lions Football Education Division

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## ELLIOT UZELAC OF BENTON HARBOR HIGH SCHOOL NAMED THE 2016 DETROIT LIONS/FARM BUREAU INSURANCE OF MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL COACH OF THE YEAR

**Detroit, MI**—The Detroit Lions have named **Elliot Uzelac of Benton Harbor High School** the 2016 Detroit Lions/Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan High School Football Coach of the Year.

Uzelac led his Tigers to a 10-1 record in 2016, consisting of an undefeated regular season and one playoff win before losing in the district final to Hudsonville Unity Christian 35-34 in overtime. He took over a Benton Harbor football program in 2015 that had never made the Michigan High School Football playoffs and was 4-50 in the six years prior to his arrival (0-9 in 2013 & 2014 and 1-8 each year from 2009-2012). Benton Harbor's last winning season had been 1989. Uzelac has compiled a 16-6 record at Benton Harbor while leading the Tigers to the first two football playoff berths in school history.

In his 47<sup>th</sup> year of coaching, Uzelac has primarily been a college coach, having been head coach at Western Michigan and Navy in addition to assistant coaching positions at Michigan, Ohio State, Colorado, Kentucky, Minnesota and Maryland among others. Uzelac began coaching Michigan high school football in 2006 as head coach of St. Joseph High School where he led the Bears to a 45-13 record during his 5 years at the school, taking over a program that had gone 11-43 in the six years prior to his arrival. He was named a Detroit Lions High School Football Coach of the Week in 2010.

### High School Football Coach of the Week/Year Program

Each week throughout the 2016 nine-week high school football regular season as well as the conclusion of the Michigan High School Football State Championships, one coach that best develops his players' character, discipline, and football skill in addition to emphasizing player health and safety in their program, is recognized for his commitment to the team, school, and community. The winners are 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), and James Cook (Traverse City Record-Eagle)**. Uzelac 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](http://DetroitLions.com/coachoftheyear).



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

Each winning coach during the regular season received a \$2,000 donation to his school's football program, a framed certificate signed by Lions' head coach **Jim Caldwell** and NFL commissioner **Roger Goodell**, and a personalized game ball. These nine coaches will be honored at an awards ceremony during the Detroit Lions-Chicago Bears game on December 11. During the ceremony, the Lions will also recognize Elliot Uzelac as the Detroit Lions/Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan High School Football Coach of the Year. Uzelac will receive a \$4,000 donation for his football program. As a result of his Coach of the Year honor, Uzelac becomes the Detroit Lions nominee for the Don Shula NFL High School Football Coach of the Year Award announced in late January 2017.

Concluding in its' 20th year, the Detroit Lions High School Coach of the Week/Year program has awarded \$389,000 to high school football programs throughout the state of Michigan. For more information on the Detroit Lions High School Coach of the Week/Year program, contact Chris Fritzsching, Lions' Director of Football Education, at 313-262-2248.

### 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

**2016 Coach of the Week recipients:** **Week 1-Corey Parker**, River Rouge, **Week 2- Ron Bindi**, Charlevoix, **Week 3-Roger Bearss**, Millington, **Week 4-Walker Zaban**, Dearborn Fordson, **Week 5-Matt Stapleton**, Frankfort, **Week 6-Tom Milanov**, Warren Mott, **Week 7-Jason Watkins**, Midland Dow, **Week 8-Dan Loria**, Bloomfield Hills, **Week 9-Kris Robinson**, Breckenridge