



KENTUCKY PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME ANNOUNCES CLASS OF 2025 INDUCTEES AND BLANTON COLLIER AWARD HONOREE

LEXINGTON, KY | February 7, 2025 – The **Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame**, the nation's only state-specific Pro Football Hall of Fame, proudly celebrates its 23rd year by announcing the **Class of 2025** inductees. This year's distinguished honorees include:

- **Michael Bush** (University of Louisville)
 - Oakland Raiders, Chicago Bears, Arizona Cardinals
- **Danny Trevathan** (University of Kentucky)
 - Denver Broncos, Chicago Bears
- **Jim Daopoulos** (University of Kentucky)
 - NFL Referee and Supervisor of Officials
- **Sam Gruneisen** (St. Xavier H.S. Louisville / Villanova University)
 - San Diego Chargers, Houston Oilers
- **Walt Yowarsky** (University of Kentucky)
 - Washington Redskins, Detroit Lions, New York Giants, San Francisco 49ers
 - Dallas Cowboys (Scout)

Additionally, the prestigious **Blanton Collier Award for Integrity On and Off the Field** will be presented to longtime NFL coach and Kentucky native **Romeo Crennel** (Western Kentucky University).

Kentucky's Football Legacy

Founded in 2003, the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame is dedicated to recognizing players, coaches, and contributors with ties to Kentucky who have impacted professional football. With 112 inductees to date and five more joining this year, the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame continues to honor NFL legends and pioneering figures who exemplify dedication, skill, and passion.

The Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame has a clear mission: *"Celebrating Kentucky's Football Legends to support Kentucky's children and young people."*

Over the years, the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame has raised over \$1 million for youth and children's charities, with the Foster Care Council of Kentucky as its current beneficiary.

Induction Ceremony and Community Impact

The Class of 2025 inductees will receive their Hall of Fame jackets from the mayor of Lexington on Friday, June 27, followed by the Purple Jacket Awards Dinner at the Hilton Downtown Lexington Hotel. This event is open to the public, and ticket information will be available soon at www.kyprofootballhof.org. Proceeds from the dinner will benefit the Foster Care Council of Kentucky.

Dr. Kay Collier McLaughlin, Chair of the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame Board of Directors, emphasized the organization's impact:

"Kentucky is the only state in the nation with a professional football hall of fame. We have the unique opportunity to honor outstanding football achievements while also supporting organizations that make a difference in the lives of children."

Frank Minnifield, Executive Director of the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame, added:
"We are excited to welcome back our Hall of Famers to help induct this year's class."

Cassie Slone, Executive Director of The Foster Care Council, expressed gratitude for the partnership, stating:

"The Foster Care Council is honored to be selected as the 2025 beneficiary. This collaboration will help us provide vital academic support, enrichment, clothing, and mentorship to Kentucky's foster children who have faced abuse, abandonment, or neglect."

More About the Inductees and Honoree

Michael Bush – (Male High School / University of Louisville)

Widely regarded as one of Kentucky's greatest high school athletes, Michael Bush turned down offers from major collegiate football programs like Ohio State to play for his hometown Louisville Cardinals. As a junior, he rushed for over 1,100 yards and ended the year as a preseason Heisman Trophy contender before a devastating injury cut his campaign short his senior season. Despite this setback, the Oakland Raiders selected him in the fourth round of the 2007 NFL Draft. After recovering from a broken tibia, Bush made his NFL debut in 2008 and in 2011 recorded 242 rushing yards from scrimmage in a single game — the fourth-most in Raiders' history. Over six seasons with the Raiders and Bears, he amassed over 3,200 rushing yards and scored 29 touchdowns.

Danny Trevathan – (University of Kentucky)

A native of Leesburg, Florida, Danny Trevathan emerged as an All-American linebacker at the University of Kentucky before being selected by the Denver Broncos in the sixth round of the 2012 NFL Draft. By his second season, he became Denver's starting inside linebacker, leading the team in tackles. Trevathan played a pivotal role in the Broncos' Super Bowl 50-winning defense, tallying eight tackles and a crucial fumble recovery in the championship game. He later spent six seasons with the Chicago Bears, finishing his 10-year NFL career with 741 total tackles.

Jim Daopoulos –NFL Referee & Supervisor of Officials (University of Kentucky)

Hailing from Marlboro, Massachusetts, Jim Daopoulos began his officiating career at the high school and college levels before joining the NFL as a field judge in 1989. He transitioned to

umpire in 1996 and officiated Super Bowl XXXIII. Over his 11-season career, Daopoulos worked four NFL Wild Card games, two Divisional Playoffs, and a Conference Championship. In 1999, he became the NFL's Supervisor of Officials, a position he held for 12 years until his retirement in 2011.

Sam Gruneisen – (St. Xavier High School / Villanova University)

A Louisville native and St. Xavier High School graduate, Sam Gruneisen played college football at Villanova before being drafted by the San Diego Chargers in the 25th round of the 1962 AFL Draft. He became the Chargers' starting center in 1965 and maintained that role through the 1970 season. A key contributor to the team's 1963 AFL Championship and multiple AFC Western Conference titles, Gruneisen played until 1973 before transitioning to coaching at both the collegiate and professional levels. He passed away in 2012 at the age of 71.

Walt Yowarsky – (University of Kentucky)

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Walt Yowarsky was initially drafted to play baseball by the Cincinnati Reds. Still, he opted for football instead, starring at the University of Kentucky under legendary coach Bear Bryant. He earned MVP honors in the 1951 Sugar Bowl, leading Kentucky to a stunning upset victory that snapped top-ranked Oklahoma's 31-game winning streak. Selected 29th overall in the 1951 NFL Draft by the Washington Redskins, Yowarsky showcased his versatility by playing eight positions across four teams—the Redskins, Detroit Lions, New York Giants, and San Francisco 49ers—during his six-year NFL career. He was a member of the Giants' 1956 Championship team and later embarked on a decades-long career as a coach and scout, including a long tenure with the Dallas Cowboys. His impact on the game spanned over 50 years before he passed away in 2014 at the age of 86.

Blanton Collier Award Honoree – Romeo Crennel (Western Kentucky University)

This year's Blanton Collier Award for Integrity On and Off the Field will be presented to Romeo Crennel, a Kentucky native and distinguished NFL and college coach. A graduate of Western Kentucky University, Crennel built a legendary career as a defensive coach, earning five Super Bowl rings and shaping the game over 50 years. He also made history as the first African American head coach for the Cleveland Browns and Houston Texans.

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