

Six To Be Honored By AlaBCA Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame

BIRMINGHAM -- Four dedicated baseball coaches will be inducted into the Alabama Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame Friday night as the 13th Class caps off the AlaBCA's Baseball Clinic and Convention at the Marriott here.

The Hall of Fame Class of 2011 includes two outstanding high school baseball coaches, a veteran college baseball coach and the legendary former commissioner of the Alabama Junior College Conference as well as two contributors who are receiving the AlaBCA's prestigious Distinguished Service awards.

Prattville High School baseball coach Roger Lambert, Baldwin County baseball coach Jerry Wright, former Enterprise State Junior College head coach and longtime University of South Alabama pitching coach Ronnie Powell will join former AJCCA commissioner James Van Horn in making up the newest class. Also to receive the AlaBCA's Distinguished Service Award are longtime umpire and coach Charlie Richards of Birmingham and former Dothan High School baseball coach and generous philanthropist Terry Collins.

The banquet will also honor the AlaBCA prep coaches and players of the year as well as AlaBCA college coaches of the year and umpires of the year. Keynote speaker will be John McCarthy, founder and director of the Home Run Baseball Camp, Elementary Baseball in Washington and Beisbol y Libros in the Dominican Republic.

Here is a brief look at this year's AlaBCA Distinguished Service and Hall of Fame honorees.

TERRY COLLINS: A standout baseball player at Dothan High School from 1970-73, Collins earned All-State honors as a senior. After signing with Troy University, he signed with the Boston Red Sox and played in the minors for two seasons.

Collins finished his degree, then began a successful baseball coaching career in the Wiregrass, first at Ashford High School for two years and then for 14 years back as his own alma mater Dothan. He guided the Tigers to seven region titles, made eight playoff appearances and won 229 games during that span to become DHS's all-time winningest baseball coach.

He moved into administration and served as assistant principal at Dothan from 1997-2005. He also was co-founder in 1993 of Screen Tech, a screen printing company that has since grown into one of the largest custom and collegiate apparel companies in Alabama.

Collins didn't give up his love for baseball, however. He was the driving force behind bringing Division I college baseball to Dothan by hosting the Screen Tech Wiregrass Baseball Classic – which has become an annual event and one of the NCAA's premier Division I pre-conference classics in the nation. Vanderbilt, Ohio State, Michigan, Washington State, Wake Forrest, Penn State, Southern Miss

and Kansas State have joined host Troy University in the eight-year history of the Classic.

Collins, who is now battling the crippling muscle disease Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALH, has continued to promote baseball in the Wiregrass. He has been named Troy University Distinguished Alumni of the Year (2001), was inducted along with his brother Shannon into the Troy University Baseball Hall of Fame in 2009 and was inducted into the Wiregrass Sports Hall of Fame in 2010.

CHARLIE RICHARDS: The former Jefferson County High School (Tarrant) two-sport standout played baseball and football at the high school located in Tarrant.

Richards, 81, played in the East-West All-Star Baseball Classic as a senior in 1946, then attended Howard College (now Samford University) where he lettered in track and basketball in 1947. He transferred to Livingston (now West Alabama) University where he lettered in football, baseball and basketball from 1948-50. After a stint in the Army, Richards returned to Birmingham and embarked on a longtime career as a teacher and coach.

He also began a longtime career as a baseball umpire and basketball official – culminating with his work in the SEC. Richards, who also is credited with training some of the state’s top high school and college baseball umpires, served as executive secretary and booking agent for the Alabama High School Umpires Association and Major College Umpires Association from 1978-1993 – while also serving as principal at Tarrant High School during that time.

A highlight of his umpiring career was umpiring the New York Yankees ‘ exhibition game versus the University of Alabama and the Birmingham Barons-Chicago White Sox exhibition. He served as Gulf South Conference Booking Commissioner for Basketball and also worked closely with Southern Association commissioner Jimmy Bragan.

ROGER LAMBERT: The son of Air Force career NCO Samuel Lambert had many opportunities to travel and learn different lifestyles while growing up. One constant, however, was baseball. He and his brothers and dad constantly talked baseball, watched baseball and whenever possible, played baseball.

He graduated from Autauga County High School (now Prattville HS) and then attended Huntingdon College. Lambert began his coaching career at Saint James School in Montgomery where he started the program at the private school in 1974. Two years later his team finished second in Class 1A.

He served as head baseball coach at his college alma mater Huntingdon (in Montgomery) from 1977-1984, then returned to high school coaching at Bullock Memorial School in the AISA from 1985-89. His 1989 team won the AISA state championship.

He then returned to his high school alma mater Prattville in 1989 and built the Class 6A program into one of the tops in Alabama. His 1998 team finished 42-8 and his 2000 team also won 40 games. His

final prep coaching record was 662-328 and his college record was 159-101 – giving him a combined 821-429 overall record.

RONNIE POWELL: The Davidson High School graduate played collegiately at the University of South Alabama from 1970-73 for coaching legend Eddie Stanky. That relationship, along with fellow USA Coach Steve Kittrell, would eventually blossom into one of the most successful coaching stories in Alabama baseball annals.

Powell served first as a graduate assistant for Stanky in 1975. He then moved back to Davidson High School in Mobile in the fall of 1975 where he built one of the top programs in the nation in a very short time. His 1979 and 1980 teams won back-to-back state titles and bolted Powell into the college coaching ranks – first at Enterprise State Junior College. He remained the Boll Weevils coach from 1981-86 – leading ESJC to two JUCO state titles. His 1982 team finished ninth in the nation. During the span from 1975-86, he sent 56 players to the next level including Jerome Walton, who reached the majors.

In 1987 he returned to the University of South Alabama where he joined Kittrell at South Alabama. Over the next 20 years as the Jags pitching coach, Powell earned the reputation as one of the nation's top collegiate pitching instructors. USA reached 17 NCAA Regional Tournaments and the 1990 pitching staff ranked third in the NCAA with a 2.80 ERA. A total of 34 of his pitchers signed professional contracts and five pitched in the big leagues.

Powell returned to high school coaching in 2007 at George County, MS, then became Director of Baseball Operations at UMS-Wright in 2009. Last year's UMS team finished 33-6 – including winning 29 of its last 30 games en route to the Class 4A state championship.

DR. JAMES VAN HORN: Van Horn was born in San Francisco (CA) in 1937 but moved to Palmyer (AL) following the death of his father during World War II. He attended Hewitt-Trussville High School where he won the Alabama cross country championship and lettered in football and track. Following high school, he attended the University of Alabama and was on the varsity track, cross country and rifle teams.

Van Horn served four and a half years active duty in the U. S. Army following his initial graduation from the University of Alabama. This service included 13 months in Viet Nam where he was decorated eight times for service as an armed helicopter pilot. He continued his military service in the U. S. Army Reserve retiring with rank of Colonel.

In 1972, while serving as the Chairman of the Health, Physical Education and Recreation Division of Jefferson State Junior College, he was chosen to become the Commissioner of the Alabama Junior College Conference. He held this position until his retirement in November 1998. In addition, he served as Alabama's representative to the National Junior College Athletic Association, first as assistant

regional director (1972–1976) and then as regional director (1976– 1998).

He has chaired NJCAA All-American Awards, and Districting Committees. He served on the Baseball Committee for 18 years, nine as chairman. He served as the NJCAA representative for the JUCO Baseball Championship tournament for nine years, Southeast District Director for Baseball (AL/GA/FL) for 13 years, and NJCAA representative to the National Amateur Baseball Council twice. He served on the first Alabama Sports Festival Steering Committee and was charged with organizing the baseball segment played at Rickwood Field in Birmingham. In 1989, Van Horn was inducted into the Alabama Junior College Athletic Hall Of Fame.

JERRY WRIGHT: The 1971 Vigor High School graduate attended Faulkner State Junior College in Bay Minette where he was a member of the Sun Chiefs Baseball team.

Wright began a 30-year teaching and coaching career in 1979, first at McGill-Toolen Catholic High School and then at Robertsdale and Evangel School. In 1989, he became head baseball coach at Baldwin County High School where he remained through 2007.

During his tenure as head baseball coach, his teams won seven area championships and finished as runner-up four times. He led his teams to playoff berths 11 times, reaching the state semifinals in 1996 and the quarterfinals in 2005. His McGill teams won four area championships and made four state playoff appearances.

He was selected as the head coach of the East/West All-Star Game 10 times and served as South head coach of the AHSAA North/South All-Star game in 2003. Wright was chosen as Area 1 Coach of the Year three times, Area 3 Coach of the Year five times, Baldwin County Coach of the Year six times and in 2005 was named Region 2 Coach of the Year.

Wright compiled a 491-290 career record with a 383-245 slate while at Baldwin County.

Also an assistant football coach, Wright was inducted into the Baldwin County High School Hall of Fame in 2009.

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