



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THREE FORMER NFL ATHLETIC TRAINERS SELECTED TO RECEIVE 'AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE'

HONOREES WILL BE RECOGNIZED JUNE 24-25 IN CANTON, BRINGING
NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS IN CATEGORY TO 17 OVER FIVE CLASSES

CANTON, OHIO – **Ed Abramowski, Kent Falb** and **Michael Ryan** have been chosen as the three individuals to be honored from the Athletic Trainers category at the 2026 Awards of Excellence. Their selection brings to 17 the number of equipment managers who have been recognized over five years.

A cocktail dinner and awards luncheon to celebrate their careers and those of this year's other honorees will take place June 24-25 in Canton. This year's honorees will be recognized in the categories of Assistant Coaches, Athletic Trainers, Public Relations Directors, Equipment Managers and Film/Video Directors.

Scott Berchtold, Jim Gallagher and **Lee Rempel** previously were announced as the recipients from the Public Relations Directors category, while **Red Batty, Mike Davidson** and **Jack Noel** were announced earlier this week as the recipients from the Equipment Managers category. Honorees in the remaining two categories will be announced this month.

Ed Abramowski

Serving as the Buffalo Bills' head athletic trainer for 36 seasons, **Abramowski** was a foundational figure in the franchise's history. After joining the Bills in the team's inaugural season (1960), Abramowski played an integral role in ensuring the team's health through their league-record four consecutive Super Bowl appearances.

An Erie, Pennsylvania, native, Abramowski began his career at the University of Detroit, where he became the youngest Division I head athletic trainer in the country. He worked part time for the Detroit Lions, and later full time at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, before being recruited by Buffalo in 1959. Players trusted Abramowski not only for his outstanding physical therapy expertise, but also for his care and compassion off the field.

For his contributions, he was inducted into the National Athletic Trainers Association Hall of Fame in 1986, and in 1999 was placed on the Bills' illustrious Wall of Fame in then-Ralph Wilson

Stadium. In 1990 and 1994, he received the Buffalo Bills Alumni Association Appreciation Award and was inducted into the Greater Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame in 1996.

Kent Falb

Accruing 33 seasons with the Detroit Lions as their head athletic trainer and more than 40 seasons working in collegiate and professional sports, **Falb** is widely regarded as one of the most influential athletic trainers to the game of football.

Beginning his professional career at the University of Iowa, Falb served as an assistant athletic trainer while earning a Bachelor of Science in 1964 and a degree in physical therapy in 1965. Like fellow 2026 Awards of Excellence honoree Abramoski, Falb worked as a trainer at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, before later stints with the Minnesota Vikings and Boston College. Falb joined the Lions as their head athletic trainer in 1967 and remained in Detroit until he retired in 1999.

Recognized for his extensive leadership in the field, Falb held key roles with the Professional Football Athletic Trainers' Society, as well as serving as president of the National Athletic Trainers Association from 1996-2000. He also served as president of the Mid-America Athletic Trainers' Association from 1989-1990. Following his retirement from the Lions, he served as the first executive assistant for the Professional Football Athletic Trainers' Society from 2002-2019.

Michael Ryan

A Super Bowl champion with the New York Giants and former head athletic trainer for the Jacksonville Jaguars, **Ryan** is a renowned sports medicine expert and physical therapist with more than 30 years of experience in the NFL. Recognized as a national expert, Ryan is currently a sports medicine analyst for NBC Sports, contributing to the network's "Sunday Night Football" and "Football Night in America" broadcasts.

After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Athletic Training from Central Connecticut State University and a second degree in physical therapy from the University of Connecticut, Ryan started his career as an intern during the New York Giants' training camp. In 1988, when Ryan was 25, the Giants offered him a full-time position, making him the youngest athletic trainer in the NFL.

Following six seasons in New York, including their Super-Bowl XXV-winning 1990 season, Ryan was selected as the Jacksonville Jaguars' head athletic trainer for their inaugural season in 1995. He remained with the franchise until 2013, when he transitioned to the broadcast booth. During his career, his leadership roles included being a chairman of the NFL Collegiate Athletic Trainers' Committee, a member of the NFL Foot and Ankle Committee and a member of the Sports Concussion Medical Advisory Board.

PREVIOUS AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE ATHLETIC TRAINERS

2025 - Ed Block, Pepper Burress and John Norwig

2024 - Steve Antonopoulos, Dean Kleinschmidt and Bill Tessendorf

2023 - J. Lindsay McLean, Bob Reese and Lamar "Bubba" Tyer

2022 - George Anderson, Otho Davis, John Omohundro, Jerry Rhea and Fred Zamberletti

ABOUT THE AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

The Pro Football Hall of Fame established the Awards of Excellence in 2022 to recognize significant contributors to the game in “behind-the-scenes” roles. In addition to athletic trainers, the program honors career Assistant Coaches, Equipment Managers, Public Relations Directors and Film/Video Directors.

The five groups presenting the Awards of Excellence create their own selection committees and set their own criteria for choosing new members. The Hall of Fame does not participate in any nominating or voting.

Also at this year’s awards luncheon, the Pro Football Hall of Fame will honor the winner of its annual photo contest. Photographs taken during the 2025 National Football League season in the “Action” and “Feature” categories and entered in the contest are eligible for awards. A panel of professional photographers will judge the entries and pick first-, second- and third-place finishers in each category.

The Photograph of the Year – chosen from the first-place winners in the Action and Feature categories – will be deemed winner of the 58th annual **Dave Boss Award of Excellence**. That photographer will be invited to Canton for the June 24-25 program, and his/her image will be placed on display in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

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ABOUT THE PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

Located in Canton, Ohio, the birthplace of the National Football League, the Pro Football Hall of Fame is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit institution with the Mission to Honor the Greatest of the Game, Preserve its History, Promote its Values & Celebrate Excellence Together.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. AAM accreditation is national recognition for the museum’s commitment to excellence and the highest professional standards of museum operation and public service.

Hundreds of thousands of fans from across the globe travel to Canton annually to experience an inspirational, interactive museum that chronicles America’s most popular sport. Fans can also enjoy the Hall of Fame Store at the Hall, and online at shop.profootballhof.com, for merchandise from all 32 NFL clubs plus the Hall of Fame. Proceeds from the Store support the Hall’s Mission.