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THREE FORMER NFL ASSISTANT COACHES 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 – An innovator of the 3-4 defense, a five-time Super Bowl champion in San Francisco and an influential special teams coach comprise the three individuals who will be honored from the Assistant Coaches category at the 2026 Awards of Excellence program.

Being honored in the Awards of Excellence program's fifth class are **Ted Cottrell**, **Bobb McKittrick** and **Mike Westhoff**. Their selection brings to 17 the number of assistant coaches 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. Honorees will be recognized in the categories of Assistant Coaches, Athletic Trainers, Public Relations Directors, Equipment Managers and Film/Video Directors.

The recipients in three categories have been announced, with the remaining group, Film/Video Directors, set to reveal their selections soon. This year's honorees include **Scott Berchtold**, **Jim Gallagher** and **Lee Rempel** in the Public Relations Directors category; **Red Batty**, **Mike Davidson** and **Jack Noel** in the Equipment Managers category; and **Edward "Abe" Abramowski**, **Kent Falb** and **Michael Ryan** in the Athletic Trainers category.

Ted Cottrell

In 24 NFL seasons spanning six franchises, **Cottrell** became an innovator of the 3-4 defense. Over tenures as a defensive line coach, linebackers coach and defensive coordinator, Cottrell mentored multiple Hall of Famers, including **BRUCE SMITH**, whom Cottrell presented at his enshrinement in 2009.

Cottrell "was the one that helped me become a complete player," said Smith, the NFL's all-time leader in career sacks with 200.

After working as Rutgers' defensive coordinator in 1980, Cottrell was hired by Hall of Fame head

coach [MARV LEVY](#) as his linebackers coach in Kansas City, his first job in the NFL. After returning to Rutgers and a subsequent stint in the UFL, Cottrell was reunited with his former mentor in Buffalo when Levy was hired as the Bills' head coach in 1986. Cottrell then spent time with the Phoenix (later Arizona) Cardinals, as both a defensive line (1990-93) and linebackers (1994) coach, before returning to Buffalo as a linebackers coach and defensive coordinator.

In 2001, Cottrell became an assistant head coach and defensive coordinator for the New York Jets, where he refined and implemented Herman Edwards' 4-3 scheme, an alignment he would take with him in his ensuing defensive coordinator roles with the Minnesota Vikings (2004-05) and San Diego Chargers (2007-08), where he utilized multiple alignments.

Bobb McKittrick

During **McKittrick's** 21 years as an offensive line coach in San Francisco, the 49ers won five Super Bowls (XVI, XIX, XXIII, XXIV and XXIX) and 13 NFC West Division titles. McKittrick is one of four coaches to be a part of all five of the 49ers' Super Bowl-winning teams.

After helping the Oregon State Beavers to a Pacific Coast Conference championship in 1956 as a two-way starter, McKittrick served as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps for three years. Returning to football in 1961, he coached linebackers and tight ends at Oregon State from 1961-64 before becoming the defensive coordinator at UCLA. McKittrick later spent time as the offensive line coach for the Los Angeles Rams (1971-72) and San Diego Chargers (1974-78) before joining San Francisco.

Established under Hall of Fame head coach [BILL WALSH](#), the Bobb McKittrick Award is given yearly to the 49ers' offensive lineman who best exemplifies the dedication, excellence and commitment of the distinguished coach.

"[McKittrick] was a vital factor in five Super Bowl championships, the evolution of a dynasty and in the production of some of the finest offensive linemen in football," Walsh said.

Mike Westhoff

A dynamically influential special teams coach, **Westhoff** spent 33 seasons in the NFL. Primarily working in the AFC East, Westhoff had extended tenures with both the Miami Dolphins and New York Jets.

After working as the special teams and tight ends coach for the Dolphins from 1986-2000, Westhoff joined the Jets' staff in 2001 as their special teams coach. He remained in that position until 2008, when he transitioned to an undefined role with the Jets due to a cracked bone graft in his left leg. He remained with the Jets until 2012.

In 2017, Westhoff joined Sean Payton's staff in New Orleans as his special teams coach midseason and remained in the position until the end of the 2018 season. He rejoined Payton in Denver, coming out of retirement in 2023, as an assistant head coach before retiring again in 2024. With the Broncos, Westhoff worked closely with special teams coordinator Ben Kotwice and assistant special teams coordinator Chris Banjo, who was a standout special teamer under Westhoff in New Orleans.

PREVIOUS AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE RECIPIENTS / ASSISTANT COACHES

2025 - Dick Hoak, Jim McNally and Elijah Pitts

2024 - Monte Kiffin, Bill McPherson and Lionel Taylor

2023 - Sherman Lewis, Tom Moore and Dante Scarnecchia

2022 – Alex Gibbs, Jimmy Raye, Terry Robiskie, Fritz Shurmur and Ernie Zampese

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

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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.