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For Immediate Release:

From: Tom Critchley; MBCA Executive Director

For further information: <http://www/mshsca.org/boysbasketball>

## **2025 MBCA Hall of Honor**

The MBCA Hall of Honor has been established to honor those persons who have helped to improve/promote/ and or serve basketball in Minnesota. Honorees have been longtime supporters of their local teams or have given outstanding service to the game of basketball. Awards are given in four categories: Officials, Media, Coach - Head/Assistant, and Friend of Basketball. Hall Of Honor inductees can be nominated by a MBCA member, the MBCA Executive Board, or the MBCA Hall of Fame committee.

The following individuals will be inducted as members of the MBCA Hall of Honor in 2025:

- **Matt Bare; Friend of Basketball** – Matt has worked for the Timberwolves for 22 years. Over the last 17 years, Matt has dedicated his efforts to engaging with the youth, Coaches, and high school basketball communities, forming meaningful relationships with hundreds of coaches and volunteers across Minnesota and beyond. His work has helped over 4,000 youth and high school teams experience the unique opportunity to play on the Target Center court helping to create lifelong memories for those players. Through his commitment to community engagement and youth outreach, Matt has been instrumental in helping the Timberwolves build the top-rated youth basketball department in the NBA. During the pandemic, Matt found another way to stay connected to the basketball community by launching the *Bare's Den Podcast*, which features in-depth conversations with high school basketball coaches and other key contributors to the game.
- **Jim Birkemeyer; Media**– “Birk” has been a dedicated radio broadcaster since 1982, bringing the excitement of basketball and other sports to listeners with his unique ability to "paint the picture" of the game. Known for his passion and energy, Jim's broadcasts, with his “cliché words”, are designed to make listeners feel as though they are right there in the action, whether it's a high-profile game or a season-long rivalry. Throughout his career, Jim has earned a reputation for his commitment to fairness, always keeping the audience engaged and voicing respect regardless of the score or the athletes on the court. His passion extends beyond play-by-play, with the creation of "Coaches Corner" programs, the "Good Student Awards," and other initiatives that have positively impacted coaches, programs, and student-athletes.
- **Ron Groth; Official**– Ron started his career officiating in Omaha, Nebraska in 1971 while going to school; he continued officiating when he moved to the Twin Cities in 1974. During his tenure as an official he worked over 1,600 games, including State Tournament and Section Championships. Ron and his main partner, fellow Hall of Honor inductee Doug Johnson, officiated the Big 9 Conference and countless games in the Twin Cities metro area for boys and girls basketball. He served multiple terms as President of the Suburban Officials Association. Ron coached youth football and basketball and in addition to his work on the court officiated high school football, with his last game being the State Tournament.
- **Brad Johnson; Friend of Basketball** – Brad has served Minnesota Schools for over 5 decades. He has been a Teacher, Coach, Activities Director, and High School Principal at Spring Valley and Rushford-Peterson; a total of 38 years (18 at Spring Valley and 20 at R-P). In his time at Spring Valley he coached basketball at all levels; junior high, junior varsity, and he was the Head Coach for 13 years.

Brad was instrumental in the success at Rushford-Peterson including 7 State Championships in 5 different sports. He is currently in his 16<sup>th</sup> year as the MSHSL Region 1A Executive Secretary. As an administrator Brad served on the Region 1A Committee and managed Boys Basketball Tournaments for the Region. He also served on the MSHSL Board of Directors; 2003-2007. Brad was named to the MSHSL Hall of Fame in 2024.

- **Doug Johnson; Official**– Doug grew up in Tracy, MN, in a family with annual state basketball tournament tickets and gained a love for high school basketball at an early age. Coinciding with a 30-year teaching and coaching career based in Woodbury, Doug officiated basketball (and also football) for most of three decades from the late 1970s to the early-2000s; over 1,450 games. Most of his basketball-officiating career was spent working with his friend and St. Olaf classmate, Ron Groth, in the Twin Cities and southern Minnesota. Later in his career, Doug and his son, Greg, officiated many weekend and summer league games together.
- **Steve Makowske; Official** - Steve has been a registered official with the Minnesota State High School League for 47 years. He has worked more than 5,000 college and high school games in his career. In 2010 he was a member of the first class to receive the MSHSL Distinguished Service Award. Steve helps lead the officials training and observer programs for the League and in 2020 he became the State Coordinator of Basketball Officials. Steve has been a presenter at MBCA Fall Clinics and has been a great ally for Coaches in rules initiative movements in Minnesota and the country. He is a proud member of the Gopher State Officials Association, serving on the board for 20+ years. Steve also serves as the State Golf Class A Tournament Manager.
- **John Otto; Coach** – Coach Otto has spent his entire educational career of 58 years serving Ulen-Hitterdal schools. His teaching and coaching career began at Ulen in 1968. In the first 34 years of his 58 years at Ulen-Hitterdal, John served as the Head Football Coach (34 years), Head Boys Basketball Coach at Ulen (68-69) and when Ulen and Hitterdal merged in 1969 he became the Boys B Squad Coach for 23 years (69 to 93). During the last 10 years of that 34 year stint (93 to 02) he served as the Girls Basketball Head Coach. John also coached Summer Rec Baseball (Pee Wee, Little League, Babe Ruth) for 34 years as well as Legion Baseball Coach for Twin Valley/Ulen-Hitterdal for 12 years. Since retirement the last 24 years, he has continued to serve as a Volunteer Football Coach, substitute teacher, and bus driver. John drives Sport Buses for all the sports the school has in its Athletic Programs and even serves as the score keeper during Boys and Girls basketball games.
- **Neil Tesdahl; Coach**- Neil started his teaching/coaching career in 1987 at Wells-Easton where he served as an assistant coach for Varsity FB and boys tennis. He moved to Crosby-Ironton in 1988 where over his tenure as a Ranger, he coached boys Junior High baseball, Varsity girls softball, ninth grade girls basketball, ninth grade boys basketball, assistant Varsity football, and boys basketball JV/varsity assistant. Upon his retirement from teaching in 2024 and moving to Chanhassen, he hit the gridiron once again assisting the Shakopee Sabers FB program. Neil has received the following honors; Butch Nash Assistant Coach of the Year for football, the MSHSCA and MBCA Assistant Coach of the Year for basketball, MFCA 35 year service award, and the 2024 Bob McDonald Leaving a Lasting Legacy award. Neil was inducted into the Crosby-Ironton Hall of Fame in 2024.

The honorees will be honored guests, recognized, and presented with an award at the MBCA Fall Clinic Awards Luncheon at the Mpls. Hyatt Regency, Friday, October 24, 2025.