

# History of the Maine Soccer Coaches

Welcome to the Maine Soccer Coaches Website. Founded in 1973, the Maine Soccer Coaches, then called the Maine State Soccer Coaches Association, is one of the State's largest coaching organizations with 253 member schools, which includes girls' coaches from 125 schools and boys' coaches from 128 schools, which are divided into four classes according to the school's student population. The group's mission is to encourage excellence in training coaches and players and serve the soccer community. Each year the Maine Soccer Coaches develops a state-wide coaches' directory for both boys and girls, provides an easy to use website, selects All-Star Teams, Coaches of the Year, All Americas, All New England players, Class Players of the Year, organizes and hosts a Senior Bowl for Regional All-Stars, and holds an Annual All-Star Banquet usually attended by over 500 people from all parts of the state.

The organization was the idea of several college and high school coaches who met in 1973. The first officers elected were President: George Stevenson, boy's coach at Gorham High School, Vice-President, Mark Michaud of Madawaska High School, Treasurer, Membership Chairman, Co-Chair All-State Banquet: Bob Knisley of Thomas College, Secretary: Charles Butt of Bowdoin College, Assistant Secretary: Arthur Giroux of South Portland, Chairman All State Selection Committee, Co-Chair All-State Banquet: Chappie Menninger of University of Maine at Portland-Gorham, and Clinic Development Chairman: Robert Doucette of Bridgton Academy.

The first All-Star Banquet was held at Thomas College in Waterville on December 14th, **1974** at 6:30. At that initial gathering with only boy's all-stars attending an Eastern Maine and a Western Maine All-Star teams were cited, along with one All-State Team. Included in the first program is a **letter** from the President of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, Mel Lorbeck, congratulating the coaches and players present at

the banquet for sponsoring the event, assuring the Maine State Soccer Association that the NSCAA was ready to provide any “assistance, of which it is capable, to the organization and to the student-athlete participants.”

The first few programs also included pictures of the State Championship teams in each class, an All-Prep team, and the play-off brackets for each class in the MPA Soccer Tournament. In the first program Bridgton Academy is pictured as the All-Prep Champions along with the 1974 Prep League Standings. In Class A Scarborough High School, in Class B Greely High School, and in Class C Richmond High School with players names underneath are presented in the program. The first three programs also pictured several college teams that had won their conference championships. Husson College in 1974, 1975, and 1976 for winning the Northeast College Conference and the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham in 1976 for clinching the NAIA District 5 Championship, are pictured along with the State Champions.

Programs in 1974 and **1975** listed an unusual bracketing — a play-off tournament between the three state champions in each class. Each team played the other two and the winner was crowned as Maine’s “State Champion”, which qualified that team to play in the New England tournament. In 1974 in the first game Class B Champion Greely defeated Class C Richmond 4 – 0, before losing to Class A Scarborough 2-1. In 1975 Class A Scarborough repeated as “State Champion” by defeating Class B Greely 2-1, and then Class C Georges Valley 6 – 0 to represent Maine in the New England tournament. These early programs also presented the Final Season Standings for the three classes, and the MPA State Championship Tournament Brackets. The **1977** Class A Tournament Bracket is a good example. Early programs also offered, under the direction of Jeff Getler of Bates College and Mike Berticelli of Thomas College, a “Free Clinic Program” with a clinic request form as shown in the **1979** Banquet Program. The program for the 7th All-Star Banquet on

December 7th, **1980** at Husson College listed the Final Standings for the plays-offs.

From 1976 to 1979 along with the various all-star teams, through the sponsorship of The Doss Soccer Company, Boys' State Championship teams from the three classes were honored with dinner, certificates and Doss soccer bags. Under the direction of David Pelton, in 1980 the site of the banquet, after being held at Thomas College (1974) and University of Maine At Farmington and John's Manor in Waterville (1975 – 1979), was moved to Husson College. Also for the first time a Collegiate All-Star team was selected by Maine's college coaches under the direction of Mark Serdjenian of Colby College.

In **1981** the 8th All-Star Banquet was also held at Husson College on December 13th at 1:30, where the first girls were honored with only one class, along with the three boy's classes. That year girls were selected to a "First Team", a "Second Team", and a "Honorable Mention Team." The "Larry Briggs" Award, given by Maine soccer officials, and "Outstanding Contributions to Soccer" Awards were also given out at early banquets. The "Larry Briggs" Award was last given to John Osbourne of Waterville at the University of Maine at Stoddard Hall in 1990. He was honored for his many years of promoting soccer state-wide through organizing the Central Maine Summer Soccer League and running youth soccer in the Waterville area. In 1983 John Rosenfeld of MDI was honored with the "Outstanding Contributions to Soccer" Award for his service to Maine soccer as Vice President in charge of All-Star balloting. Today the Maine Soccer Coaches Service Award is given for a coach's dedication and longevity to the sport of soccer in Maine. Those recipients are Peter Gardiner of Brunswick and Richmond (2013), Peter Poulin of Maranacook High School (2011), Gene McClure of Deering High School (2009), Glenn Hutchins of Greely (2007), Peter Belskis of Ashland High School (2006), Michael McGraw of Lewiston

High School (2005), and Ed Marshall of Madawaska High School (2004), Ron Marks of Schenck (2002), and John Rosenfeld of MDI (1983)

The growth of soccer in Maine is shown through the addition of girl's soccer and the gradual expansion of classes over a twenty year period. In 1970 the Maine Principals Association sponsored one class – Class A – in soccer and only for boys. In 1973 the MPA added Class B while Class C added in 1974. It was not until 1989 that Class D was added as a separate classification. Girl's soccer was added in 1980 with one class – Class A. In 1983 the MPA added Class B, with Class C following in 1987, and finally Class D was added in 1989 leading to the present classification system for both boy's and girl's soccer. In the early days on the boy's side high schools from Van Buren, Fort Kent, Ellsworth were in Class A, and Bangor Christian and Belfast were in placed in Western Maine by the MPA. On the girls side Waterville was in Western Maine Class A in the early years.

A look at the MPA Classification for boys in 1974 and 1975 shows a remarkably different set-up compared today's high school scene. Gorham, Bonny Eagle, Scarborough, Brunswick were prominent schools in Western Maine Class A, and Camden-Rockport, Madawaska, Fort Kent, and Caribou appear in the Eastern Maine Class A Play-off Brackets. In Class B Greely, Yarmouth, Freeport, Erskine Academy and Wiscasset competed in the West, and Schenck, Ellsworth, Fort Fairfield, Mt. View, Penquis Valley, Penobscot Valley, and Narraguagus faced off in the East. In Class C the Western Bracket was made up of teams from Richmond, Georges Valley, Gould Academy, and St. Dominic's, while the East had teams from Lubec, Woodland, Washburn, and Ashland. The first State Champion Sites were the University of Maine/Orono for Class A and Class C, where Scarborough defeated Fort Kent 1 – 0 for the Class A State Championship, and in Class C Richmond bested Woodland 3 – 0. The Class B site was Thomas College where Greely defeated Schenck 6 – 0.

Likewise, the same is true on the girl's side. In 1985 teams from Brunswick, Mt. Ararat, Cape Elizabeth, Windham, Fryeburg and Morse played in Western Maine Class A, while Eastern Class A was comprised of teams from Bangor, Bucksport, Houlton, Waterville, Madawaska, and Orono. In Class B, Western Maine was made up of Richmond, Waynflete, Upper Kennebec Valley, Oak-Grove Coburn, and Wiscasset, and Eastern Maine Class B had teams from John Bapst, Penquis Valley, Sumner, Wisdom, Lee Academy, Greenville, and Penobscot Valley. From 1980, the first year of Girl's soccer, to 1985 the Class A State Championship was won by one team for five straight years — Waterville. In 1983 Hyde School won the first Class B State Championship, and in 1987 Carrabec won the first Class C State Championship. When Class D was added by the MPA in 1989, Ashland won the first State Championship in that classification.

Under the leadership of Michael Jeffrey of Brewer High School, who was elected President in 1988, the 1st Annual Maine Soccer Coaches Senior Bowl, then call the "Absolute Soccer Senior Bowl", was played at Brewer's Pendleton Field on November 15th, 1992 where the Eastern All-Stars played the Western All-Stars. Brewer was the site of the only first two senior bowls, when it was moved to Maine Maritime Academy's astroturf field where it stayed for five years. There a Collegiate All-Star game was added where the players from University of Maine System schools played all-stars from Maine's NAIA and small private colleges. The game that was played the second year at the Maine Maritime was delayed for over two hours because of poor driving conditions and the loss of electricity. After the delay, around noon, the sun came out and the temperature rose to over 65 degrees and all three games were played in beautiful conditions. Because of low player turn out and the fear of weather-related cancellations and hoping for a better turn out, the date of the game was changed to the springtime, with Brunswick (1997) chosen as the first site, and the next year it was moved to Lewiston (1998). Because low player turn out was still an issue, the game was moved back to the present fall date, on the Sunday the week-end after the State Finals, to Hampden

Academy's new field turf field in 1998. In 2016 the Maine Soccer Coaches Annual Senior Bowl was moved to Husson University. But because of nearly 100% turnout and only the use of one field the game was moved to Thomas College using the dual field setup. Also, where in the past all Senior Bowls were played with all classes together, they were split at Thomas College with North AB vs South AB and North CD vs South CD playing in separate games. During its twenty year duration the Senior Bowl game has been canceled three times do to weather conditions, in 2000, 2002 and 2019.

Like classification and site changes, the number of teams honored by the Maine Soccer Coaches has changed over the years. Initially with only one class and one gender, only three teams were honored in 1974. Today a total of 16 different All-Star teams are honored each December in front of over five hundred coaches, players, family members and friends at the Spectacular Event Center in Bangor. As mentioned above the first banquets were at Thomas College, University of Maine At Farmington, and Husson College. In 1985 the site of the banquet was moved to the Wells Commons at the University of Maine at Orono. Boys and Girls were honored together for three years at that site until the length of the event became too long, thus the banquet was divided into two separate affairs at the University of Maine at Orono. The girls met at Wells Commons and the boys moved to Stoddard Hall Commons. Presently, each banquet recognizes Class Regional All-Star teams, as well an Eastern and Western State Team. In 1989 Maine's first All Americas and All New England players were honored. On the boy's side Ryan Leib of Mt. Blue and Kevin Wiercinski of Brunswick were selected, and on the girl's side Hilary Roy of Orono was Maine's first female All America. Also, in 2006, the Maine Soccer Coaches added a "Player of the Year" in each class for both genders. Players, depending on the team they are selected to, receive a certificate, a paperweight, key chain, or plaques.

For the first time in 1978 a Collegiate All-Star team on the Men's side was selected by Maine's college coaches under the direction of Mark Serdjenian of Colby College, a role which he filled for 21 years, through 1998. Then because of the repetition of Conference All-Star selections the Maine Collegiate All-Star team was discontinued. On the Women's side, under the leadership of Keith Bosley of Husson College and Diane Boettcher of Bates College, a Maine Collegiate All Star team was selected from 1990 to 1998. It was discontinued for the same reason as the Men's Collegiate All-Star team. Moreover, for several years in the 1990's there was a Collegiate Senior Bowl sponsored by the Maine Soccer Coaches, and played on the same day as the High School Senior Bowl. This game was between the Division 1 and 3 schools and the NAIA schools. Sadly results and years they were played are unknown at this time.

Besides honoring student athletes, banquets were and still are the site of the Maine Soccer Coaches Annual Meeting, and once even allowed for College Coaches to meet with players interested in attending their school. The College Coaches Forum was eventually dropped from the banquet program because of low turnout, but the Annual Meeting still takes place in the morning before banquet presentations.

Moreover, as the Maine Soccer Coaches grew many of its members joined the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, now the United Soccer Coaches, thus qualifying the group with the opportunity to select All America and All New England players. In 1989 the Maine Soccer Coaches selected three All Americas — Ryan Lieb of Mt. Blue, Kevin Wiercinski of Brunswick, and Hilary Roy of Orono. These three players were also the first All New England players honored at the 1989 Banquet. Since that first year because of our membership numbers in relation to the other New England states in Region 1 the Maine Soccer Coaches have honored 76 male and female All Americas, 148 male All Region players and 147 female All Region players. In 2010 Luke Pierce of Yarmouth High School was honored by the United Soccer Coaches as Maine's first, and so far, the

only player to be selected to the Boys' High School Scholar All-America team.

Through its relationship with the United Soccer Coaches the Maine Soccer Coaches is able to nominate a Large School, a Small School, and a Private School nominee for the United Soccer Coaches Region 1 New England "Coach of the Year". This recognition places the Maine nominee up against nominees from the other New England states, and if selected the nominee will vie for the United Soccer Coaches National "Coach of the Year", and be honored at the United Soccer Coaches Annual Convention Banquet. In 1998 David Halligan of Falmouth High School was selected as the United Soccer Coaches Large School National and in 2016 Aaron Wilcox of Bangor Christian was awarded this National Honor in the Private School Category." Over the past thirty years many Maine soccer coaches have been selected as the United Soccer Coaches Region 1 "Coach of the Year", including, on the boy's side, Andy Strout of Cape Elizabeth (1996), Gary Trafton of Monmouth Academy (2000), Adam Leach of Bangor (2006), Joe Schibelitto of Richmond (2007), Micheal Andreasen of Greely (2007), Michael Hagerty of Yarmouth (2008), David Patterson of Bangor High School (2010), Aaron Wilcox of Bangor Christian (2010, 2011, and 2016), Chris Gardiner of Washington Academy (2015), Michael McGraw of Lewiston (2015), and Brandon Salway of Waynflete School (2018). On the girl's side Tom Pickering of Lee Academy (2003), Don Hoenig of Belfast (2003), Jeff Thoreck of North Yarmouth Academy (2006), Jeanne Zarrilli of Gorham (2006), Stephanie Thurlow of Lee Academy (2007), Troy Kendrick of Richmond (2007), Walter Calwell of York (2007), Jon Shardlow of Waynflete (2008), Cid Dyjak of Orono (2008), Martyn Davison of Brunswick (2009), Michael Farley of Scarborough (2010), Joe Johnson of Bangor (2011), Peter Belskis of Ashland (2016), Ricky Doyon of North Yarmouth Academy (2019), and Meredith Messer of Camden Hills (2019) received similar regional recognition. It should be noted that 2007 was a special year because on the Girl's side Maine had a coach selected as United Soccer

Coaches Region 1 “Coach of the Year” in all three categories: Large School, Small School, and Private School.

As noted above, Meredith Messer of Camden Hills and Ricky Doyon of North Yarmouth Academy were selected as Region 1 “Coach of the Year”. Todd Whitcomb of Falmouth was honored as the Region 1 “Assistant Coach of the Year for 2019.

The year 2019 was even more special placing soccer in Maine in the National spotlight. Individually, for the first time a Maine soccer player was selected as the United Soccer Coaches Female High School “Player of the Year” and the Region 1 “Player of the Year”. Kristina Kelley of Camden Hills, a three time All America, was awarded both honors by the National Organization.

On the team-side Yarmouth High School was ranked by the USA Today/United Soccer Coaches Super 25 Final Poll #8 in the Country and #1 in New England for the first time in Maine Soccer History. Falmouth High School was also ranked #12 in the last Region 1 Poll. On the Girl’s side Camden Hills High School was ranked 22nd nationally and 4th in Region 1 by the United Soccer Coaches/USA Final Polls. Cape Elizabeth High School was ranked 13th in the Final Region 1 Poll.

In 2006 the Maine Soccer Coaches launched a website, developed a state-wide Boys’ and Girl’s Coaches’ Directory, and an email address book for communication, nominations, and voting. The website has links to archives listing awards given in past years, a season calendar listing important dates and deadlines, links to the MPA website and Heal Point Standings, and an explanation of the All-Star process. In 2012 a new website was designed giving coaches access to archives, a coaches’ directory, and clinic options.

In 1975 George Stevenson of Gorham High School and the Association’s first president wrote a **“news release”** in the first program to the coaches

and those being honored at the first Banquet. He commented how pleased he was that 80 High Schools were currently fielding teams in Maine and that out of 1600 boys playing soccer there would nearly 100 honored at that second banquet. He further noted that about two-thirds of all the coaches in the state participated in the voting process. In 2019 over 85% of the coaches participated the the Regional All-Star Selection Process. He would certainly have to be pleased with the present number of 253 schools fielding teams in Maine.