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Contact: Clare Graff, NFL  
212/450-2435/clare.graff@nfl.com

## **FINALISTS NAMED FOR NFL HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD**

### **Winner to Receive Cash Award, Football Program Grant and Trip to Super Bowl XLIII**

As the NFL playoff season unfolds and players use skills they learned on the high school football field, more than 60 players recognized the coaches who helped shape them during their teenage years by nominating them for the 2008 NFL High School Football Coach of the Year Award. Created in 1995, the award honors coaches who profoundly impacted the athletic and personal development of NFL players.

This year's finalists and the NFL players who nominated them are:

<b>Coach</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Nominated By</b>
Danny Cronin	East Coweta High School	Newnan, GA	Keith Brooking, Atlanta Falcons Chris Hanson, New England Patriots
Rob MacLachlan	Wallaceburg District Secondary School	Ontario, Canada	Shaun Suisham, Washington Redskins
Ken Ozee	Sam Houston High School	Arlington, TX	Mark Clayton, Baltimore Ravens
Tom Padjen	Thornton Fractional South High School	Lansing, IL	Pierre Thomas, New Orleans Saints
Ray Seals	Madison High School	Houston, TX	Moran Norris, Detroit Lions Vince Young, Tennessee Titans

Each finalist receives a \$2,500 cash award and a \$5,000 grant for their high school football programs. The winner, announced during the week of January 19, will attend Super Bowl XLIII in Tampa Bay as a guest of the NFL and receive a \$5,000 cash award and a \$10,000 grant for his high school football program. All grants will be awarded by the NFL Youth Football Fund (YFF).

"Our players come from different backgrounds, regions and life experiences," said NFL Commissioner **ROGER GOODELL**. "The one thing they all have in common is that they received guidance and learned important life lessons from their high school coaches. These five finalists have dedicated their lives to teaching young players how to become leaders both on and off the field, and we congratulate them and all high school coaches for the roles they play in helping develop the leaders of our game."

A blue-ribbon committee of sports leaders appointed by the NFL selects the winners. The panel is comprised of **JON BUTLER**, executive director, Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc.; **JACK FLEISCHER**, veteran sportswriter; **SCOTT HALLENBECK**, executive director, USA Football; **GRANT TEAFF**, executive director of the American Football Coaches Association; former Dallas Cowboys personnel director and NFL.com contributor **GIL BRANDT**; and **MIKE BERG, TONY DEMATTEO, RICH**

**KALLOK** and **WILLIAM MCGREGOR II**, all former NFL High School Football Coach of the Year winners.

In his nomination essay, Tennessee Titans QB **VINCE YOUNG** called Coach Ray Seals of Madison High School a great coach who truly has a passion not only for the sport, but for the community he coaches in, the school and the players. Seals also was nominated by Detroit Lions FB **MORAN NORRIS**, who praised him as a “father figure.”

Washington Redskins K **SHAUN SUISHAM** recognized Coach Rob MacLachlan of Wallaceburg District Secondary School, writing, “[His] contribution to our community and my development has been incredible...He is truly passionate and enjoys teaching and developing young men.”

**KEITH BROOKING** of the Atlanta Falcons and **CHRIS HANSON** of the New England Patriots both nominated Coach Danny Cronic of East Coweta High School. Brooking remembers Coach Cronic’s message of “You Get What You Earn” and Hanson called him “a pleasure to play for.”

Coach Ken Ozee, formerly of Sam Houston High School, was nominated by Baltimore Ravens WR **MARK CLAYTON**, who remarked, “As a young man, to have someone in your corner pushing you to be better is a great thing.” Saints RB **PIERRE THOMAS** had similar high praise for Coach Tom Padjen of Thornton Fractional High School, calling him “a role model” and adding, “He gave me advice on how to be a better man...He wasn’t just a coach, he was also a friend.”

Established in 1998 by the NFL and the NFL Players Association, the NFL Youth Football Fund seeks to use football as a catalyst to promote positive youth development, support youth and high school football needs nationwide and also ensure the health of grassroots football in future generations. Through the YFF’s youth football initiatives and support programs, youngsters are provided with opportunities to learn the game of football, get physically fit and stay involved in productive after-school activities with adult mentors.

To see a complete list of this year’s nominees or for more information on NFL Youth Football initiatives, visit [www.NFLHS.com](http://www.NFLHS.com)

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