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Coach Aaron Pixley Receives Honorary Charles Bland Award

NOVEMBER 10TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Coach Aaron Pixley Receives Honorary Charles Bland Award

Dexter, MO - There is only one award given to a Bearcat Football Athlete each year that all seniors strive to obtain, the Charles Bland Award! It's a bronze trophy, similar in appearance to the Heisman Memorial Trophy. It was first awarded in 1994, 27 years ago. This year's award went to the 28th recipient Camden Riley; however one more trophy was created and given this year to a man who loves his athletes, his football team, and his community. He's a true Bearcat and is retiring at the end of the 2022 academic school year. That man is none other than Coach Aaron Pixley.

Pixley has a passion for football. He loves his wife and family and enjoys being "Pop Pop" to his grandchildren. He also is a community man. He not only teaches and instructs athletes on the field, but off the field he is a mentor to many. He loves his community.

“(I was) very surprised. I had no idea,” Pixley said of winning the award. “I think these guys know they’ve got to keep it from me or I’ll try to talk them out of it. It was very nice. I’m very honored. I’ve worked for good people. It’s a great school. More than anything, we have great kids. It’s been my honor to coach them all these years. I’m just blessed to have been here.”

Pixley, graduated DHS in 1988, was hired as head football and weightlifting coach in 2000 and became the school’s all-time wins leader over the next 13 seasons.

“The dedication to the weight room and molding minds to get tougher than anyone you come up against has led him to become the winningest football coach in Dexter history,” Jason Comfort said. “He’s a man of great humility who will tell you he was simply blessed with some great kids, great assistant coaches, and he doesn’t deserve any accolades.”

During Pixley’s first run as head coach, the football team compiled a 78 - 59 record and won district championships in 2002, 2010 and 2011 and conference titles in 2002, 2005 and 2011. They reached the quarterfinal round in 2011.

He left Dexter and went to Kennett for four years as head coach, returning to his home town in 2018 coaching another four years as head football coach of the Bearcats.

“Coach got to come back home,” Comfort stated. “Never accept mediocrity became his war cry when he hit the ground. He even had it on T-shirts.”

With a total of 17 years, he is the longest-tenured football coach in Dexter High School history. He retires this season with a record of 93-83 at DHS and his total 21-year career as a head coach was 114-105.

“All the time and energy he’s put in the weight room and football field over the last 21 years, the impact this man has made on students is immeasurable,” Comfort said. “The lessons taught are not just lessons for high school athletics. They were lessons for life. The lesson was life’s tough. It’s going to kick you. We must be better, stronger and tougher. The lesson is the most important thing is to always do the right thing, even when it sucks and it’s not any fun. The lesson is when times are hard, we must stay together and love on each other.”

Congratulations Coach Pixley it's been one heck of a ride!!

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Camden Riley Receives 28th Annual Charles Bland Award

NOVEMBER 10TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Camden Riley Receives 28th Annual Charles Bland Award

Dexter, MO - The Annual Fall Sports Awards Program was held at Dexter High School on Monday, November 8, 2021. Jason Comfort awarded the 28th Charles Bland Award.

"Each year we honor an athlete on the football team with the Charles Bland Award," stated committee member Jason Comfort. "This year the voting was extremely close. It gets harder and harder with athletes doing so well on and off the field."

"This is the 28th year we have given out this award," continued Comfort.

The Bland Award is presented to the senior football player who is the most well-rounded student-athlete.

The winner must meet several criteria, including community participation, school participation and attendance, attitude, leadership qualities, grade-point average and athletic ability.

Camden Riley was presented with the 2021 Charles Bland Award on the stage of the Dexter High School auditorium. He gave a short speech thanking his mom and dad, his coach and teammates.

Besides football, Riley plays baseball and is involved in several clubs in school, including Sr. Beta Club, National Honor Society and Student Council. He is involved in the community through his church, Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

He is the son of Andy and Natalie Riley.

His future plans are to attend Mississippi State University.

His most memorable moment at DHS is receiving First Team All-Conference his Junior year.

A little history of the Bland Award

The late Charles ‘Seed’ Bland - the man that the stadium these athletes battled in during their high school careers - was a very active supporter of the Dexter School System for many years. The most amazing gift ‘Seed’ gave was his pride in the Bearcats, as well as the young people of Dexter High School.

Known only to a few, the late Ruth Bland was the ‘athlete of the family’ and was a standout for both the DHS basketball and track teams. It has been written that she was ‘the best female athlete in Southeast Missouri’ during her time.

Together, the Bland family has been there to support Dexter Schools and Bearcat Athletics for over 60 years.

Past Winners of the Bland Award

1994 - Kevin Young

1995 - Jason Comfort

1996 - Kent Essner

1997 - Mike Guethle

1998 - Justin Kelley

1999 - David Howard

2000 - Jason mayer

2001 - Nathan McKay

2002 - Drew Wethington

2003 Marc Thrower
2004 - Derek Clark
2005 - Andrew Stuever
2006 - Drew Pixley
2007 - Eric Windham
2008 - Nick Hessling
2009 - Gary Summers
2010 - Taylor Jarrell
2011 - Tyler Miller
2012 - Ryan Joiner
2013 - Holden Bruce
2014 - Noah Kronk
2015 - Tyler Stevenson
2016 - Jason Jarrell
2017 - Ben Sindle
2018 - Nate Gargas
2019 - Austin Guy
2020 - Ryan Collier
2021 - Camden Riley

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2021 Dexter High School Fall Sports Awards

NOVEMBER 10TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

2021 Dexter High School Fall Sports Awards

Dexter, MO - Dexter High School held their annual Fall Sports Awards Ceremony on Monday, November 8th in the DHS Auditorium. Several awards were given as well as First Time Letters "D" were awarded. A special honor to retiring Coach Aaron Pixley and the Charles Bland Award was also presented.

Awards were presented to each Fall Sport. Up first was Coach Starla Pulley with the Volleyball Awards.

Volleyball

The Lady Bearcats finished 19-10-1, including winning the Stoddard County Athletic Association (SCAA) Tournament Championship.

Offensive Player of the Year: Carly Long

Defensive Player of the Year: Magi McBride

Assists Leader: Dulcie Pullen

Most Valuable Teammate: Andie Kruse.

Girls Tennis

Coach Kristi Boles, trying not to shed a few tears, gave out four awards. She also said that she had never seen so many fans in attendance at tennis before. She was even nervous at a couple of matches with the number of fans who showed up to support her girls.

The Lady Cats went 8-10, and the season was highlighted by Julianna Rivera and Maci Comfort's doubles second-place finish in the Kennett Invitational.

Highest Win Percentage in Singles: Maci Comfort. She went 7-7 while playing the No. 2 position.

Best Win Percentage in Doubles: Natalie Bolin. She went 11-12.

Most Valuable Teammate: Julianna Rivera on varsity and Grace Marvel on Junior Varsity.

Cross Country

The Bearcats sent five athletes to the MSHSAA State Cross Country Meet.

Coach James Deberry presented the awards.

Female Runner of the Year: Gabby Brown. She finished 19th place at state bringing home an All-State Medal.

Male Runner of the Year: Ben Dowdy.

Cheerleading

Coach Lindsay Woods announced that Rachel Lin earned the Football Cheerleading Award which is voted on by her teammates.

Football

Retiring Coach Aaron Pixley recognized the football team for their accomplishments and announced four awards which were selected by the players.

The Bearcats finished the 2021 season 6-5 and credited his 14 seniors for the program's great success this year.

"I am truly honored to go out with this group of young men," stated Pixley.

Most Valuable Player: Josh Alday

Most Valuable Defender: Lucas Alday

Most Valuable Lineman: Frank Wirz

After the awards in an interview with Pixley, "We went from two years ago winning one game, last year winning three games, and this year six games. So It's headed in the right direction.

Pixley will continue to work with his players as the school's weightlifting coach and the assistant wrestling coach in preparation for handing over the program to a new coach in 2022.

Dexter High School athletes who won awards at the fall sports program Monday night are:

(front row, from left) Magi McBride, Dulcie Pullen, Andie Kruse, Camden Riley, Maci Comfort, Julianna Rivera, Natalie Bolin, and Rachel Lin

(back row, from left) Ben Dowdy, Josh Alday, Carly Long, Lucas Alday and Frank Wirz.

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Dexter's Gabby Brown Returns With Medal in Class 3 Girls Cross Country

NOVEMBER 08TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Dexter's Gabby Brown Returns With Medal in Class 3 Girls Cross Country

Columbia, MO - Dexter senior Gabby Brown finished 19th and earned an all-state medal from the MSHSAA Class 3 Cross Country Championship held on Saturday, November 6, 2021 in Columbia at Gans Creek Cross Country Course.

She finished in 19 minutes 59.1 seconds.

Also in Stoddard County richland senior Alexia Kemp took 21st in 21:40.9 in Class 1 Girls Cross Country.

Bell City junior Kennett Rampley finished 25th in 17:52.9 in Class 1 Boys Cross Country.

The top 25 in the state receive a medal.

The Bloomfield Cross Country team in Class 2 Boys finished 10th out of 16 teams.

Freshman Ben Dowdy was Dexter's top finisher, placing 64th in 17:53.9. Junior Clayton Bell was 95th in 18:20.5 and freshman Cameron Bell was 117th in 18:38.4.

Dexter sophomore Abbie Lloyd finished 102nd in 22:27.7

Pictured: Dexter senior Gabby Brown wears the all-state medal she won for placing 19th in the MSHSAA Class 3 Cross County Championships on Saturday, Nov. 6, 2021, at Columbia. (Photo courtesy of James Deberry)

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Coach Aaron Pixley, Dexter's Longest Bearcat Football Coach, Retiring After 17 Years

NOVEMBER 04TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Coach Aaron Pixley, Dexter's Longest Bearcat Football Coach, Retiring After 17 Years

Dexter, MO - On October 29, 2021 Coach Aaron Pixley stepped onto Charles Bland Stadium High School Football Field for the very last time under the Friday night lights. He will have at least one more opportunity to coach on Friday, November 4th when the Dexter Bearcats travel to Kennett in a District semifinal game.

Coach Pixley graduated from Dexter High School in 1988. He was hired in 2000 to be the weightlifting coach and head football coach.

In his first stint at Dexter High School he was the "All-Time Wins" leader over 13 seasons as head coach. From 2000 to 2012 Pixley accumulated a 78-58 record.

In his first year as the Dexter Head Coach, Pixley had a team shirt that stated his philosophy toward the game of football, and obviously life. The slogan read "Never Accept Mediocrity".

His thirteen seasons as the gridiron master has provided our community many exciting Friday nights. His record tells the story with 78 wins which is a record for any head football coach at DHS. His two best seasons were in 2002 in his third year as the head coach the Bearcats had a season of 8-3 and then in 2010 was perhaps his most memorable year with a record of 8-5 and playing in the Class 3 State Quarterfinals.

In addition, the community has been able to experience the joys of victory with three titles as SEMO Conference Champions, 2002, 2005 and 2011. The Bearcats won four District Playoffs, 2002, 2005, 2010 and 2011, with 2010 making it to the State Quarterfinal.

After 4 years at Kennett High School he came back home to finish his career.

He is passionate about winning football games, but that was not his ultimate goal. Pixley always put turning his players into great upstanding men above all and puts character above winning a football game.

Coach will end his career with a few titles. The title he is most proud of is the Longest Bearcat Football Coach of All-Time at Dexter High School. He will close out his football career of 17 years with the Bearcats at the end of the 2021 season and a total of 21 years of football coaching.

A former player said, "You are a man of great character, you are humble, you are genuine and sometimes you were intimidating. You were never just a coach, you were so much more."

We hope you kick back and enjoy that pool and make lots of memories with your other favorite title, being "Pop Pop".

A game ball signed by the Class of 2001 was presented at the 50 yard line.

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