



2024 COACH OF THE YEAR

With over 65 coaches nominated for the 2024 Avon Youth Sports Coach of the Year presented by Hendricks Regional Health, Coach Dave Mejean has **earned** the title!

Dave's coaching history with Avon Youth Sports (formerly Avon Junior Athletic Association) dates back to 1996 when his coaching journey began with his first season coaching a 3rd/4th grade Minors Division Tackle Football team. That first season would propel a coaching journey for him that would extend far beyond after his own children had aged out of the program. His three sons played football and basketball, while his daughter played basketball and was a cheerleader for AJAA (now Avon Youth Sports) in the 1990's. Mejean played football growing up in Ohio, but they didn't offer programming until the 7th grade at that time. He believes that the AYS program gives kids a jumpstart to not only learning the game of football, but more importantly the chance to learn life lessons.

Mejean is strictly a tackle football coach, which enables him to commit to the time that it takes to



DAVE MEJEAN

invest in each team he coaches and each player. One parent thanked Coach Mejean this year, saying of her son, "He's learned a lot this season and actually feels a part of the team for the first time. No one has ever paid attention to the linemen or took the time to teach them their jobs. If it wasn't for your coaching style, this very well could have been his last season. He wasn't sure he wanted to play this year. Thank you for investing in him."



Mejean recalled another parent who messaged him the following: "Thank you for your patience, caring, and communication. The social and emotional skills kids get from team sports has really blown my mind [this was his first year playing]. It was helpful to have a coach that sets the standard. He will forever be impacted. This was needed more than you could ever imagine."

Junior Orioles Football Commissioner, Greg Reynolds said, "Dave is the standard of what an Avon Football youth coach should be. I've been coached by him as a player. I've also coached against him when my boys played at AJAA. There isn't enough room on this survey to list the reasons he is the Coach of the Year! If we had an AYS Coaches Hall of Fame, he would be the first in!"

One parent thanked Dave for working to help build each athlete's character. They said that although their athlete was never the best, or close to the best on the team, Coach Mejean spent just as much time teaching and coaching him as he did the other players. An Assistant Coach of Mejean's said that his calm demeanor creates a positive and supportive environment which is crucial for young athletes to learn and grow, and he teaches them a love for the game!

So how exactly does Dave make this big of an impact through coaching the game of football? He ensures each coach is consistently teaching the players the same things. He teaches them "how to be on time, how to push themselves, and how to keep getting better." Mejean also teaches them to not be afraid to make a mistake, but to learn from them. He says that "practice is to work on things you're not good at" and "the biggest mistakes in our lives are our biggest teachers." He also teaches them teamwork, specifically how to stick together and back each other up. Practically speaking, if a player makes a mistake, he encourages the entire team to come around them and pat them on the back. We all make mistakes,

but Mejean insists that what matters is "how you handle mistakes after you make them."

What advice would Mejean give to a new coach? He says communication with the parents is key and don't miss the chance to get out and run around with the kids! When Mejean is not coaching, he enjoys watching his former players compete on Friday nights. He does the MaxPreps live scoring for AHS football games. He also enjoys going to the AHS summer football practices and says that there is "always something to learn" even at age 65. He adds that the high school coaches are always willing to teach the youth coaches. Mejean also enjoys volunteering at the Big Ten Football Championships through the Indy Sports Corporation each year.

Mejean believes that we need to get more athletes involved in youth football. With the current partnership with Avon schools and our current youth football leadership team, he says that the future is bright. Lastly, Mejean wanted to thank his wife, Denise, for allowing him to coach all these years.

From all of us at Avon Youth Sports: Congratulations, Coach! This award couldn't go to a more deserving person, and we thank you for 29 years of being a difference maker and building into young athletes. Well done!



Writer/Amanda Maxwell