

# Payne: All-Academic Team a tradition like no other in Macomb

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Jeff Payne

Outside of my position at The Macomb Daily, I coach high school athletics. I am often asked by parents of those student-athletes I have the pleasure of working with "how can my child get a scholarship?"

My answer has never changed: "Do well in the classroom."

Today more than ever, parents and students are mesmerized by the dealings of star athletes. We assign stars to football and basketball recruits and a cottage industry has developed and grown promoting the opportunity to make your kid the next star. Twitter and other social media feeds are filled with athletes promoting their choice of a college and all the big things they are going to do. And coming soon, a select few of those young stars will even be able to get paid marketing their likeness on products.

Those opportunities, while desirable, are also rare. So rare that some schools may only lay claim to one per generation. At the school I coach at, a young athlete went on to star at Michigan State University and was on the field when the Spartans won the Rose Bowl in 2014. Before that, the last male athlete to play major college football from that school was in the late 1960s.

Contained in these pages and on The Macomb Daily website today is the 2021 Macomb County All Academic Team. Collectively, the amount of scholarship money collected by these young men and women probably approaches the \$1 million mark. Some will be continuing their academics locally while others will be going off to places far away. They may not have 40-inch vertical leaps or blazing

fast 40-yard dash times. But what they have will make them the leaders of their communities and workplaces one day. [Macomb Daily - Special Sections - Macomb County All-Academic Team 2021 \(pageflip.site\)](#)

The Macomb All-Academic Team was started in 1986 by The Macomb Daily to honor the county's academically best students similar to all-county teams in athletics. Students are selected in three classes -- A,B and C/D -- according to school enrollment. In recent years, the Macomb County Principal's Association has added a Dream Team, which is the top 25 honorees regardless of class.

Last year, the team was again recognized but due to the hasty onset of the COVID-19 pandemic it was limited to the publication of names on a page. No photos, no biographies. This year, the banquet that had accompanied the naming of the team in its first 33 years is again not happening. Instead, local educators and this editor took part in a video filmed at the Macomb ISD offices honoring the team members.

Hopefully next year, the banquet can return. In both my roles as a high school coach and as editor of The Macomb Daily I typically get to go to plenty of banquet-style gatherings. None top the All-Academic banquet where we get to recognize the work of these high achievers.

The team was the brainchild of retired Macomb Daily Staff Writer Gordie Wilczynski, who worked with principals and superintendents to get it off the ground and grow it. Following his retirement, the paper stepped back from some of its responsibilities. While we still publish the section and our news staff helps get the information in print and online, the Macomb ISD has done an incredible job not only maintaining but even expanding the event. Their commitment to recognizing excellence is a reminder of just how lucky Macomb County is to have an Intermediate School District that I would offer is one of the best in Michigan.

To the students featured today, congratulations on all your success. While we may not be recognizing you over plates of glazed chicken and green beans, we are nonetheless proud of the work you have done and look forward to the leaders you will become.

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