

IGCA E. Wayne Cooley “ You Can” Award

Nominee: Shelby Hansen, Senior, IKM-Manning

Shelby Hansen, senior, was a starter all year at catcher and was batting over .400 in the clean-up spot when she took a foul tip in the throwing hand during the final game of the regular season. The injury forced Shelby to sit out of the first regional game and into the DP position upon her return to the lineup. As difficult as it was to be in the dugout on defense, Shelby seized the opportunity to mentor the new catcher and continued to encourage our pitcher and her teammates. She never felt sorry for herself; she only asked what she could do to help her team. As a result of her “team first” attitude, her teammates voted her most inspirational at the end of the season.

Nominated by Joy Gross, IKM-Manning Head Softball Coach

Nominee: Niki Green, Junior, Central DeWitt

I would like to nominate one of my players for this award. Her name is Niki Green. She is a junior for me this year. She has played at the varsity level as an 8th grader on. Her 8th grade season she was an all-district/all-state player. At that time she was stricken with a muscle problem in her right eye. This problem has caused her a great amount of problems with the three sports she has been involved in. She was put on steroids for the problem that caused her body to change. She has struggled for the past couple of years but has been determined to continue on and has shown great dedication while doing so. I think she is an excellent candidate for this award.

Nominated by Kevin Roling , Central DeWitt Head Softball Coach

Nominee: Dan Thompson-Head Softball Coach Westwood High School

I have had the honor of knowing many coaches over the years. I’ve always felt that a good coach is competitive, and maintains a high level of accomplishment throughout their program and their career. Dan Thompson is one such coach. He began his career at Emmetsburg where he took a struggling program and made it a powerhouse in the Lakes Conference. He then went to Westwood High School where he led his team to the state tournament in his first year and has had quality teams ever since. Every time you played Westwood you knew you were in for war. Tough-nosed, mixed with a strong will to win is what Coach Thompson and his teams are about. What is even more amazing was Coach Thompson’s ability to bounce back after a tragic car accident that involved some of his wrestlers suffering catastrophic injuries. Where many people would not have recovered from such an ordeal, Coach Thompson stared adversity in the face and emerged a hero gaining the respect of his players and the communities he serves. A first rate individual, Dan is a leader, striving for excellence in everything he does. Westwood is lucky to have softball coach like him.

Nominated by Jason Stoltzfus, COU Head Softball Coach

Nominee: Scott Connolly, North Tama Head Softball Coach

I am writing to nominate Scott Connolly for the E. Wayne Cooley "You Can" award. Coach Connolly walked onto the North Tama Softball Diamond for the first time in May 2006. Come to think of it, that is the first time he walked on any softball diamond as a coach, having just graduated from the University of Northern Iowa. North Tama had been through numerous head coaches in the past couple of years. Needless to say, the program was in serious trouble and the girls left playing for the Redhawks were very young and in need of leadership. Coach Connolly came with exactly the attitude put forth in this award..."You Can", actually he preached..."We Can". Together with his players they studied the game, worked on the fundamentals and came out every night ready to play. That first season they finished with a 3 and 20 record.

Coach Connolly's determination and drive won the hearts of the girls; they became a "family". They knew he cared about them, was willing to work hard for them and together they dreamed about their future. Scott taught himself to pitch while working with the girls to perfect their craft. Together they got ready for their 2nd season, which ended with 4 wins. While some would not value a 4 and 22 season, Coach Connolly knew his team had improved greatly and he believed they had great things in their future.

2008 brought a 5 and 21 record and 2009 was the most promising yet as the Redhawks finished 9 and 14. After 4 years with the Redhawks the bonds had been established, goals had been set, and a program that was in shambles had a promising future. 2010 came with many dreams and goals. This group of seniors and underclassman had bought into the beliefs their coaches had for them. They had cheered on Coach Connolly, also a North Tama Assistant Football Coach, and their male classmates to two consecutive top 4 finishes in Class A football. This group of girls believed it was their turn.

Needless to say, while the 2010 Redhawk softball team did not make it to the state tournament they did finish with a 22 and 10 record, and won their first post-season game in Coach Connolly's tenure. The 2010 team, under Coach Connolly's direction set 20 new school records and had a team batting average of .403. It's also very safe to say that Redhawk Softball, under the direction of Scott Connolly and his coaching staff has found new life and continues to dream about their future.

The North Tama County Community School District is proud to nominate Scott Connolly for the E. Wayne Colley "You Can" award. It is Coach Connolly's commitment to family that has led him to accept a position with Dike-New Hartford Elementary School. We wish Scott many years of success in his future endeavors, both in the classroom and on the field, and hope you will honor his efforts with this award.

Nominated by The North Tama County Community School District

Nominee: Victoria Whitaker, Senior, Valley West Des Moines

The past four years Victoria has been a dedicated member of the varsity softball team. She is a very talented player that consistently put her team in front of her own personal goals and feelings. She worked in tandem with Emma Remy (a two time 1st team all state pitcher) to anchor our pitching staff the past three seasons. Victoria, in most every program in the state would have been the go to pitcher or number one pitcher without question. Because of her strong sense of team and commitment to team success accepted a lesser role because it was best for our team. For example, in 2009 Victoria played third base in game one of our double headers and pitched game two. She finished the season with a perfect 19-0 record and could have been our number one pitcher heading into the post season tournament. I made a decision to go with the other pitcher because we were a better defensive team with Victoria playing third base. She never once asked why she didn't get to pitch in the post season she just accepted her role and did it extremely well.

Nominated by Tom Bakey, Head Softball Coach Valley West Des Moines High School