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## **York, Kahle, Thomas named 2026 IBCA Assistant Coaches of the Year**

Aides for Greencastle boys, Gibson Southern girls, Fishers girls cited by Indiana Basketball Coaches Association

Rob York of Greencastle, Ron Kahle of Gibson Southern and Bill Thomas of Fishers will receive special awards from the Indiana Basketball Coaches Association, it was announced Monday (March 23).

The three coaches each will be recognized as a 2026 IBCA Assistant Coach of the Year. York has been a Greencastle boys' assistant for 19 seasons. Kahle has been a Gibson Southern girls' assistant for 20 seasons after many years in other coaching roles, including time as a state championship baseball coach at Tecumseh and also serving as the Gibson Southern boys' track head coach. Thomas has been a Fishers' girls assistant for nine seasons after previous roles at IUPUI, Hamilton, DeKalb, Carroll (Fort Wayne) and Fort Wayne Blackhawk Christian.

This is the ninth year that the IBCA is recognizing assistant coaches with an award. The awards are going to three coaches who have contributed in a significant way to their respective schools' athletic programs.

These awards will be presented during the 2026 IBCA Clinic on April 23-24 at Mt. Vernon High School in Fortville.

Previous IBCA Assistant Coach of the Year honors have gone to Roger Bowling of Union County in 2018; Clark Miles of Jeffersonville and Danny Pierce of Crawfordsville in 2019; Jim Brothers of North Putnam and J.R. Moffatt of Hamilton Heights in 2020; Hassan Abdullah of Penn and Jim Higdon of Edinburg in 2021; Ray Weatherford of Eastern (Pekin) and Scott Reid of Crown Point in 2022; J.D. Miller of Connersville and Stephanie Richie of Evansville Central in 2023; Dean Scott of Barr-Reeve and Bill Lane of Jennings County in 2024; and Josh Wetzel of Heritage Hills and Brian Samples of Oldenburg Academy in 2025.

Information on York, Kahle and Thomas, the 2026 honorees, follows.

### **IBCA Assistant Coach of the Year: Rob York, Greencastle boys**

Rob York has been an assistant coach in the Greencastle boys' basketball program for the past 19 seasons, long providing support for coaches and players alike.

York has been a part of the program since 2007, assisting former coach Troy Greenlee for nine seasons and current coach Bryce Rector for the past 10 seasons. His contributions are considered vital to the Tiger Cubs.

"Rob was one of the first people I met when I became head coach, and I immediately could see that he was going to be a key part of the program," Rector said in his nomination of York. "In the first meeting, I remember Rob telling me that he was there to do whatever he could to support me and the program.

"While running a large business, Rob rarely misses a practice or game and always is willing to do whatever is needed of him. One time a few years ago, I saw Rob out to eat lunch with a former player who had recently graduated. When I talked to Rob later, I asked what the lunch was about. He said, 'Oh, I just wanted to catch up with him and see how he was doing before he left for college.' Rob's work with our guys goes far beyond the basketball court and our players are better off because of their time spent with him."

In addition to supporting the Greencastle boys' basketball program, York also supports the Greencastle community, serving on multiple boards and contributing to various efforts. Among those was serving as fund-raising chairman for the Putnam County YMCA, where funds were raised for a new facility that opened in 2025.

Greencastle High School principal Yolanda Goodpaster has observed York's contributions.

"Rob is highly respected by players and coaches alike for his integrity, dedication and positive approach," she said. "He consistently models sportsmanship and emphasizes character development, teaching young men

the importance of being good teammates, friends, sons, students, employees, and, if they eventually choose, fathers. His influence extends well beyond the basketball court, shaping lives through example and encouragement.”

David Taylor, a parent of three alumni in sons Cory, Conner and Carson, concurred.

“All three benefited from spending time with Rob both on and off the court,” Taylor said. “They share countless ‘Coach York stories,’ and they grew to appreciate Coach York and the way he coached them and cared about them. They all would agree that Coach York was tough but at the same time compassionate.

“Now I sit across the gym watching the current Greencastle team play. I see this same coach interact with the current players the exact same way he interacted with my boys. I know that this current group of boys, each one, is benefiting from having Coach York at their practices, at their games and in their lives. It truly is what coaching high school basketball is about and why my family and I continue to support this coach, all the coaches and the entire program.”

York is a 1987 graduate of Greencastle, where he competed in basketball and golf. He went onto Indiana University, earning a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice in 1991. He and his brother, Nick, operate York Automotive Group, an auto dealership with locations in Brazil, Greencastle, Plainfield and Crawfordsville.

York is married to Tammy, and he has four children – Trey, Brady, Colin and Meilani – and three grandchildren.

“Rob York is one of the most dedicated coaches I have been around,” Rector said. “He is always the positive voice in practice, whether that be serving as a positive supporter for our players after a tough loss or pulling a player who is struggling on or off the floor aside and having a heart-to-heart conversation with him. He is a coach who truly cares about the players during their time in our basketball program but also their life after playing basketball at Greencastle.”

## **IBCA Assistant Coach of the Year: Ron Kahle, Gibson Southern girls**

To say that Ron Kahle is committed to serve the youth in his community would be a large understatement.

A girls’ basketball assistant coach at Gibson Southern for 20 seasons, including the past eight with head coach Kyle Brasher, Kahle (pronounced “collie”) long has dedicated himself to serving student-athletes in southwest Indiana.

“Ron has been teaching and coaching in our community for parts of five decades and has made a lasting impact on countless players,” Brasher said in nominating Kahle. “Ron began his career as a teacher, getting to know many of athletes in the classroom long before he ever coached them. This allowed Ron to build meaningful relationships and connect with students on a personal level before stepping onto the court.

“Ron not only coaches basketball but also currently works with Gibson Southern athletes in track and field and football. Coaching in multiple sports allows him to see students in different settings and engage with them in a variety of ways, strengthening those relationships even further. In addition to his coaching roles, Ron also serves as a bus driver. Our athletes see first-hand how professional he is and how deeply he cares about their safety and well-being.”

Over the years, Kahle has coached middle school boys’ basketball, middle school football and middle school track. He also has assisted with Gibson Southern football, was the head coach for Tecumseh baseball and currently is the head coach for Gibson Southern boys’ track. His Tecumseh baseball team qualified for three State Finals, was the 2002 Class A state runner-up and won the 2003 Class A championship. His Gibson Southern boys’ track teams have won five Pocket Athletic Conference titles and eight sectional trophies.

Specific to basketball, after coaching middle school boys from 1983-2006, Kahle has been part of the Gibson Southern girls’ program ever since – assisting former coach Mark Monroe from 2006-18 and Brasher from 2018 to the present.

“From his time in the classroom and coaching middle school basketball to the last 20 years serving as an assistant basketball coach, you would be hard-pressed to find someone more deeply connected to a community,” Brasher said. “Ron has never met a stranger, and his engaging personality naturally draws people in. He is an incredibly giving and helpful person. In fact, he even came out of retirement as a teacher this year to step back into the classroom and fill an area of need in our building. That speaks volumes about his character.

“Ron has demonstrated his dedication over the years by doing everything it takes to be an integral part of our basketball program. He serves as one of our lead scouts and takes great pride in every facet of preparation, making sure our athletes are fully prepared for each game. Ron attends every team and player meeting, all

offseason events and practices, and supports our program from the high school level all the way down to our elementary events. His commitment is consistent and unwavering.”

Brasher noted Kahle’s impact on himself.

“Ron is old enough to be my father, but I never have felt that he viewed me as someone young or inexperienced,” Brasher said. “While I may hold the title of varsity coach and he is the assistant, he has taught me far more than I could ever teach him. I am blessed to call him not only a coach on our staff, but more importantly, a friend and a confidant in life.”

Kahle is a 1977 graduate of Southridge High School, where he competed in four years of basketball, four years of baseball, two years of football and two years of cross country. He was a part of the Raiders’ first basketball sectional champion in 1976. He went on to the University of Evansville, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in education in 1981 and a master’s degree in education in 1984. He also worked as a graduate assistant in the UE education department in 1981-82 and was a Purple Aces’ graduate assistant baseball coach in the 1982 season.

He began his career in education in 1983 at Haubstadt Community School in the South Gibson School Corporation, teaching history and social studies for 38 years as well as physical education for nine of those years. As noted, he came out of retirement to teach history at Gibson Southern High School in 2025-26.

He coached football, basketball and track for years at Haubstadt, baseball at Tecumseh from 1997-2003, assisted in football at Gibson Southern starting in 2000, assisted in middle school track again in 2004 and 2005, assisted in high school track from 2006 to 2008, then became the high school boys’ track head coach in 2009. All told, he has coached in 121 of 129 “sport seasons” over the past 43 years. In five spring seasons when he did not coach, from 1992 through 1996, he served as a licensed IHSAA umpire in baseball.

Kahle was named the Class A baseball State Coach of the Year in 2003, but he transitioned back to a Haubstadt track assistant and band parent in 2004 and later a high school track assistant so he could be closer to daughters Kelli and Kasey. Both were involved in band, and Kasey was a thrower in track. Since 2010, he has run a USA Track & Field-certified summer camp for throwers.

He and his wife, Glenda, a three-time cancer survivor, also served as a host family for the Lions Youth Exchange from 1998 through 2005.

Kahle is an avid fan of Indiana University basketball, St. Louis Cardinals’ baseball and sports in general. He and his wife enjoy traveling and time their daughters, sons-in-law and four grandchildren.

“Ron has earned the nickname ‘Grandpa Kahle’ because of his big heart and the genuine care he shows for every athlete,” Brasher said. “He has taught and coached many of our current athletes’ parents, which makes his impact on our community a truly special, full-circle legacy.”

## **IBCA Assistant Coach of the Year: Bill Thomas, Fishers girls**

Bill Thomas has been an assistant coach in the Fishers High School girls’ basketball program for the past nine seasons and a fixture on a court somewhere the past 29 seasons.

Since 2017, Thomas has been a key assistant to Lauren Votaw, although he served as interim head coach for 12 games this past season when Votaw and her husband, Jeremy, stepped away to adopt a child.

“When Lauren told Bill that we were considering adopting a second baby, he told her he would do whatever was necessary to allow that to happen,” Jeremy Votaw said in nominating Thomas. “On top of that, Bill and his wife (Christi) organized a fundraiser to help with our adoption expenses.

“Our daughter was born in Texas three days before Thanksgiving. Bill stepped in as our head coach from then until mid-January without blinking. He knew from the beginning that this would mean taking on additional responsibilities. Bill’s selflessness gave our family the stability we needed to commit to a second adoption, and it gave our coaches and players the stability they needed to continue through the middle of the season in Lauren’s absence.”

With his variety of coaching experience, Thomas was prepared for the lead role. He was an IUPUI women’s basketball student assistant from 1997-99, assisted the girls’ team at St. Thomas Aquinas in Florida in 1999-2000 and was an IUPUI full-time women’s assistant from 2000-02. He also was the Hamilton High School boys’ head coach in 2002-03, a DeKalb girls’ assistant from 2003-06, a Carroll (Fort Wayne) girls’ assistant from 2006-11 and a Blackhawk Christian girls’ assistant in 2011-12. He coached elementary and school-based girls’ travel teams starting in 2013, then returned to the high school girls’ game as an assistant to Votaw in 2017. During his tenure, he was a part of teams that won six sectionals and helped Fishers to a Class 4A state runner-up finish in 2023.

“As a teacher and coach, I encourage my students and athletes to surround themselves with people who bring out the best in them,” Lauren Votaw said. “Undoubtedly, Bill Thomas does that for everyone he encounters at Fishers High School.”

Jeremy Votaw alluded to a coaching maxim that states that the players won't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

“Bill leaves no doubt that he cares about our players, starting with the day they walk into our gym and continuing after they graduate,” he said. “The first thing you notice about Bill is that he never stops being a dad, regardless of what's happening or who's around. That shows through the ways he connects with our girls and the ways he protects and serves them.

“When third-graders arrive for the first day of summer camp, Bill introduces them like he's the P.A. announcer at a Pacers' game. He has inside jokes with our middle school players. He teases our high school players about how they're doing in class. It makes them laugh, but, more importantly, it makes them know that he notices them and he cares about them when they're not playing basketball.”

Thomas is a 1991 graduate of Franklin Central, where he played basketball, tennis and baseball. He was a part of a Flashes' basketball team that won the 1991 Marion County Tournament while playing for Mark James. Thomas went on to Purdue University, earning a bachelor's degree in public relations in 1995. He then earned a second bachelor's degree in English education from IUPUI in 1998.

He has worked in education at Hamilton High School (2002-03), DeKalb High School (2003-05), Brooks School Elementary School (2016-17), Fall Creek Intermediate School (2017-19) and Fishers High School (2019 to present). He currently teaches health & wellness and freshman seminar, and he previously has taught English, English for New Learners and assisted with developmental preschool and special education.

Thomas was recognized with a Fall Creek Intermediate Staff Person of the Year Award in 2019, multiple selections to the Hamilton Southeastern district's Educator Honor Roll and the 2026 Fishers Tigers Legacy Award.

From 2005-16, he was a stay-at-home father while operating a stone and glass engraving business, Making Memories Engraving, which created memorials for veterans, churches and custom engravings.

Thomas also has served the community throughout the years. He currently volunteers with the Good Samaritan Network in Hamilton County and served as a small-group leader at Northview Church. An advanced master gardener learned through Purdue, he previously led the construction of a community garden as a member of Pathway Community Church in Fort Wayne. In 2010, he served on a Christian mission trip to the Dominican Republic that featured a youth basketball clinic.

Darren Simms, a fellow teacher at Fishers, said Thomas has become one of the most trusted adults at the high school because he is someone who prioritizes relationships and student well-being.

“Bill has a unique ability to mentor students who may feel disconnected from school, helping them develop confidence, accountability and a sense of belonging,” Simms said. “His classroom is a welcoming space where students regularly choose to arrive 30 minutes before school simply to talk, seek advice or start their day in a positive environment.”

Thomas stepped down from his Fishers' coaching position at the end of 2025-26, so he and Christi have more time to watch their daughters – Kate, a sophomore basketball player at Grace College, and Natalie, a Fishers senior who plans to play at Bethel University – in their college careers.

“Bill has left a lasting impact on the FHS girls' basketball program.” Lauren Votaw said. “His mentorship of me as a head coach, passion for leading a program with integrity and desire for excellence will be pillars of our program long after Bill retires.”