



WASHINGTON COMMANDERS NAME LARRY CHOATES AS THE TEAM'S NOMINEE FOR THE 2022 DON SHULA NFL HIGH SCHOOL COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD

LANDOVER, Md., January 12, 2023 – The Washington Commanders announced Coach Larry Choates as the team's nominee for the 2022 Don Shula NFL High School Coach of the Year Award. The league-wide award honors high school football coaches who display the integrity, achievement, and leadership qualities exemplified by the winningest coach in NFL History, Don Shula.

Coach Choates has served as Varsity head coach at John R. Lewis High School in Fairfax County, Virginia for two years and has made an immense impact on his team, school, and community. Coach Choates has an empathetic and education-first mentality ensuring that his players feel supported in the classroom and in their personal lives. His goal is getting his athletes to graduate with honors, continue playing football in college, and leave high school with real world experience that will influence their lives for the better.

Coach Choates is dedicated to ensuring that his students have the resources, opportunities, and experience that they need to be successful in high school and beyond. Since John R. Lewis is the smallest high school in the county, Coach Choates fundraises tirelessly to ensure that his team has proper funding. Additionally, Coach Choates has implemented a program to have Spanish-speaking members of the coaching staff partner with various teams and departments at the school to help bridge any language barriers and personally connect with the players. Since his tenure, the high school football team has experienced a 100% graduation rate.

“We are so proud of the recognition that the Washington Commanders are extending to our football coach, Larry Choates. Coach Choates works tirelessly to not only coach our student-athletes on the field, but he serves our community by also leading our student-athletes off the field,” said Principal Alfonso G. Smith. “At John R. Lewis High School, we build bridges to connect all of our Lancers to their full potential. Coach Choates’ football program helps to make this happen with a very special group of our students.”

Coach Choates teaches leadership through his team's participation in school and community initiatives. The team has participated in Read Across America by reading to students at a local elementary school. The Rising Lancers program connects students with middle schoolers to teach skills to those who are interested in playing sports. Additionally, in partnership with Springfield Youth Club Little League, the team provided equipment and volunteered as referees for the Springfield Youth Club Little League Flag Football.

A blue-ribbon panel including Peyton Manning, Tony Dungy, and Scott Pioli will review NFL clubs' nominations and coaches' submissions to select two Don Shula Coach of the Year Award winners (one from the AFC & one from the NFC). The winners will be announced by the NFL in the coming days. To commemorate their accomplishments, the winners will receive an all-expenses paid trip to both the 2023 Pro Bowl Game in Las Vegas, NV and Super Bowl in Phoenix, AZ. Additionally, the two winning coaches each will receive \$15,000 for their high school football program and a \$10,000 personal award.

The High School Coach of the Week Program is an NFL initiative that aims to highlight local high school football coaches who consistently demonstrate a dedication to their programs, their players' health and safety, and to making a difference in their community. During the Coach of the Year selection process, an internal committee, made up of members of the Washington Commanders Community Relations department, considered how each nominee demonstrates the importance of player health and safety, community engagement, a focus on academics, and student-athlete character development. As a nominee, Coach Choates will receive a \$1,000 personal award and an additional \$1,000 for his high school football program.

2022 Washington Commanders High School Football Coach of the Week Award

Nominees:

Week 1: Alan Hall-Arcadia High School (Oak Hall, VA)

Week 2: Maurice Vaughn-Dunbar High School (Washington, D.C.)

Week 3: James Ford- Culpeper County High School (Culpeper, VA)

Week 4: Zach Barnisky- Freedom High School (Chantilly, VA)

Week 5: Mark Shuman- Fork Union Military Academy (Fluvanna, VA)

Week 6: Larry Choates- John R. Lewis High School (Fairfax County, VA)

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