



**For Immediate Release:** November 23, 2016

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## **NFL Hall of Famer Mike Ditka Named 2016 Walter Camp “Distinguished American”**

New Haven, CT – NFL Hall of Famer **Mike Ditka** (University of Pittsburgh) is the 2016 Walter Camp Distinguished American award recipient.

The Walter Camp “Distinguished American” award is presented each year to an individual who has utilized his or her talents to attain great success in business, private life or public service and who may have accomplished that which no other has done. He or she may have a record of dedication to mankind that should not pass unrecognized and a life that has been dedicated to the preservation of the American ideal. The recipient need not have participated in football but must be one who understands its lesson of self-denial, cooperation and teamwork, and one who is a person of honesty, integrity and dedication. He or she must be a leader, an innovator, even a pioneer, who has reached a degree of excellence that distinguishes him or her from contemporaries, as well as someone who lives within the principles of Walter Camp.

Past recipients of the Walter Camp Distinguished American honor include nationally-respected sportscasters Pat Summerall (2004) and Verne Lundquist (2014), all-purpose television personality Regis Philbin (2003), former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue (1994), world-renowned entertainer Bob Hope (1985), former college coach Eddie Robinson (1982), and last year’s recipient, Special Olympics CEO Tim Shriver.

“Mike Ditka is an American football icon,” said Walter Camp Foundation president Robert Kauffman. “He has done it all as a player, coach and commentator. More importantly, he cares deeply about the sport of football and helping those who have made it so great.”

A native of Aliquippa, Pa, Ditka attended the University of Pittsburgh where he starred in three sports (football, basketball and baseball). Following his collegiate career, Ditka was selected in the 1961 NFL (Chicago Bears, 1<sup>st</sup> Round - 5<sup>th</sup> selection) and AFL (Houston Oilers, 1<sup>st</sup> Round -8<sup>th</sup> pick) drafts.

A member of both the College Football and Pro Football halls of fame, Ditka was the NFL Rookie of Year, a five-time Pro Bowl selection and five-time All-Pro tight end with the Chicago Bears, Philadelphia Eagles, and Dallas Cowboys. He was named to both the NFL’s 50th and 75th Anniversary All-Time Team.

He was an NFL champion with the 1963 Bears, playing for the venerable George S. Halas. Halas was also honored by the Walter Camp Foundation as its “Distinguished American” in 1980.

Ditka is a three-time Super Bowl champion, playing on the Cowboys’ Super Bowl VI team as well as winning as an assistant coach for the Cowboys in Super Bowl XII. As a head coach, Ditka led the Bears to victory in Super Bowl XX – a 46-10 victory over the New England Patriots.

Ditka served as head coach of the Bears for 11 seasons (106-62, .636) and was a two-time NFL Coach of Year (1985 and 1988). He also coached the New Orleans Saints for three years. Ditka is one of just two people to win a NFL title as a player, an assistant coach, and a head coach.

Following his retirement as head coach, Ditka has been a television commentator and analyst, and has appeared in several sitcom television shows. Most importantly, he has been involved in several philanthropic

activities, including The Gridiron Greats Assistance Fund, which focuses on the humanitarian side of post-football related issues, which include coordination of social services to retired NFL players who are in need.

*Walter Camp, "The Father of American football," first selected an All-America team in 1889. Camp – a former Yale University athlete and football coach – is also credited with developing play from scrimmage, set plays, the numerical assessment of goals and tries and the restriction of play to eleven men per side. The Walter Camp Football Foundation – a New Haven-based all-volunteer group – was founded in 1967 and it is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year in 2016-17. The organization's mission is to perpetuate the ideals of Camp and to continue the tradition of selecting annually an All-America team and honoring deserving individuals.*

### **Distinguished American recipients**

2016 – Mike Ditka, University of Pittsburgh  
2015 – Tim Shriver, Yale University/Special Olympics  
2014 – Verne Lundquist, Texas Lutheran  
2013 – Joe Theismann, Notre Dame  
2012 – Tom Osborne, Hastings College/University of Nebraska  
2011 – Floyd Little, Syracuse University  
2010 – Chuck Bednarik, Pennsylvania  
2009 – Robin Roberts, Southeastern Louisiana  
2008 – Len Dawson, Purdue  
2007 – Frank Broyles, Georgia Tech  
2006 – Dick Vermeil, San Jose State  
2005 – Arthur Blank, Babson  
2004 – Pat Summerall, Arkansas  
2003 – Bill Walsh, San Jose State  
2002 – Regis Philbin, Notre Dame  
2001 – New York City Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Service Personnel  
2000 – Gene Upshaw, Texas A&I  
1999 – Bo Schembechler, Miami (Ohio)  
1998 – Steve Young, Brigham Young  
1997 – Steve Largent, Tulsa  
1996 – Dick Ebersol, Yale  
1995 – Keith Jackson, Washington State  
1994 – Paul Tagliabue, Georgetown  
1993 – Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C.  
1992 – Carm Cozza, Miami (Ohio)/Yale  
1991 – Alexander Kroll, Rutgers  
1990 – Tex Schramm, Texas  
1989 – Richard Kazmaier, Princeton  
1989 – Burt Reynolds, Florida State  
1988 – Y.A. Tittle, Louisiana State  
1987 – Weeb Ewbank, Miami (Ohio)  
1986 – Tom Landry, Texas  
1985 – Bob Hope  
1984 – Maj. Gen. Bill Carpenter, Army  
1983 – Tom Harmon, Michigan  
1982 – Eddie Robinson, Grambling State  
1981 – Harold "Red" Grange, Illinois  
1980 – Alexander Haig, Army  
1980 – George Halas, Illinois  
1979 – David "Sonny" Werblin, Rutgers  
1978 – James Crowley, Notre Dame