

Awards Profile

Sports Management Institute Honorary Degree

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Mike Cleary
Executive Director
NACDA



In recognition of his more than 40 years of service to intercollegiate athletics, the Sports Management Institute is conferring an honorary degree on Mike Cleary, executive director of NACDA.

Cleary is the only executive director in NACDA's history. He was named to the post in 1966, one year after the Association's founding and has served continuously for the past 40 years. Additionally, he is president and primary fund administrator for the John McLendon Minority Scholarship Foundation. Under Cleary, NACDA has risen from a 300 member organization to one whose membership numbers more than 6,100 individuals and more than 1,750 institutions throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Cleary oversees the professional and educational services NACDA provides including the annual Convention; Facilities Workshop; NACDA Foundation; the bimonthly magazine, *Athletics Administration*; NACDA Daily Review; and web site. NACDA also administers the U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup; Coca-Cola Community All-American Awards program; and GeneralSports TURF Systems Athletics Director of the Year Awards program. Additionally, NACDA has teamed with the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA), the NCAA and NAIA on NCAA Football and NAIA Football. Previously, NACDA sponsored two annual preseason college football games, the Kickoff Classic and the Pigskin Classic, for a total of 33 preseason bowl games.

As fund administrator of the John McLendon Minority Scholarship Foundation, Cleary has been responsible for raising more than \$1 million to date. Through the program, five \$10,000 postgraduate scholarships are presented to minority students who are planning to pursue a graduate degree in athletics administration.

While serving with NACDA, Cleary simultaneously held the posts of commissioner of the Ohio Athletic Conference (1973-81) and administrator of the Division 1A Athletic Directors Association (1986-92).

Previously, Cleary was director of championship events for the NCAA for three years and administered all national championships and ran the annual convention. He also initiated the honors and awards luncheon and created and named the Teddy Award. He had also been director of championship events for two years with the NAIA and was responsible for the operation of the annual convention and 32-team basketball tournament.

Before entering collegiate athletics, Cleary was general manager of the Cleveland Pipers in the old American Basketball League under owner George Steinbrenner. While with the Pipers, Cleary hired John McLendon, the first Black coach to head an American professional sports team. He also served as general manager of the Kansas City Steers of Abe Saperstein's ABL and Midwest scout for the New York Knicks.

A behind-the-scenes person, Cleary has served on committees with the U.S. Olympic Committee; New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA); and National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame, to name a few. In 1999, Cleary was named to the Board of Directors of the National Football Foundation (NFF) and, in 1995, received the NFF's Award for the Outstanding Contribution to Amateur Football. Additionally, in 1997, he received the St. Ignatius High School Distinguished Alumnus Award; in 1999, he was honored by the National Alliance of Two-Year College Athletic Administrators (NATYCAA); and in 2004, received an honorary doctorate from the U.S. Sports Academy.

A native of Cleveland, Cleary, 71, graduate from John Carroll University. He was the sports information director and cross country coach at his alma mater. Additionally, Cleary served for two years in the Navy aboard the aircraft carrier, the USS Lake Champlain.