

Alabama Baseball Coaches Association Distinguished Service Award



J.T. COOPER **2014 Recipient**

*“In Recognition of a Lifetime of Outstanding Achievement in the game of Baseball.
The State of Alabama will forever be in your debt.”*

J. T. Cooper has been umpiring high school and youth baseball since 1959. Ironically, he got his start when Southern Choctaw High School baseball coach Pete Stanley drafted a young teacher to umpire his game versus Butler High School at Silas more than half a century ago.

Cooper graduated from Millry High School in 1951, then served in the U.S. Army from 1953-55 before returning home to where he attended Livingston State Teachers College. He graduated from Livingston (now the University of West Alabama) in 1959 where began teaching at Southern Choctaw.

Stanley’s appeal to this young teacher sparked Cooper’s interest. He called his former high school coach at Millry to see if his alma mater needed an umpire and his umpiring career took hold.

He moved to Mobile in 1961 and began teaching at Mae Eanes Junior High School, where he remained for 34 ½ years. During that tenure, he was named Outstanding Teacher of the Month in October 1979.

He also continued to officiate high school baseball and recreational baseball around the Mobile area. He quickly became one of the most popular and respected umpires in the area – becoming a leader in the Metro-Mobile Umpires Association.

Cooper has officiated local, regional, and state playoffs as well as the majority of the area’s Lions Club All-Star games during that time span. He served in the MMUA for 50 years – from 1962 until his retirement for health reasons after the 2012 season.

He received an Appreciation Award in 1994 from International Babe Ruth Baseball, and a special Service Award from Maitre Park Babe Ruth Association in 2000. Cooper was named AHSAA Baseball Official of the Year in the Southwest District in 2010 and was honored by the Mobile area coaches and umpires with a special tribute in 2013.

He and his wife Clydene have been married 48 years. His daughter Sherri accompanied Cooper on many of his umpiring trips – often serving as a bat girl for one of the teams as her dad umpired the game.

Cooper’s profound love for the game of baseball has created a lasting legacy from the many lives he has touched while serving the youth of Southwest Alabama as ‘Mr. Umpire.’

Honored January 17, 2014