

Joseph R. "Joey" Jones, Class of 1980

Joey came to Murphy from a private parochial school his sophomore year. He had no trouble fitting in, and his chosen area was sports. In tenth and eleventh grade he played football, basketball, and baseball. His senior year he replaced basketball with track, a sport more suited to his speed. His senior year Joey placed 2nd in the 100-yard dash at the state level. He was honored as football Player of the Week by the Optimist Club several times, named Back of the Year, and he was also selected to play in the All-State football game in Tuscaloosa. Even though he was a transfer, Joey was very popular and was elected class favorite his senior year. While sports occupied much of his time, Joey was active in FCA. Joey was described as a determined person who had goals for himself. His nominator described him also as a caring person who always had a smile and a kind word or a question about others and their families.

Joey attended the University of Alabama, earning a Bachelor's in Business Administration while playing football for Bear Bryant. He had a great career there, earning All-SEC honors as receiver, and he was named to Alabama's All-Decade Team for 1980s. He wrote a book about his experiences there: In Good Hands (1985). His athletic ability led him to playing professional football for the Birmingham Stallions (USFL) 1984 and 1985. After the USFL folded, he was picked up by the Atlanta Falcons (NFL) for the 1986 season.

After his professional play, Joey moved into coaching, beginning at Briarwood Christian. He then moved to Dora High School. His last stop for high school coaching was Mountain Brook H. S. These teams all performed well, and Joey was hired in 2006 to restart the football program at Birmingham Southern. In 2007, Joey followed the example of his mentor Bear Bryant and came when "mama called" (mama being Mobile), joining the University of South Alabama and creating a football program from scratch. The USA Jaguar Football team sprang onto the field, and a research university had a new spirit. One USA graduate said that the school is a different place than the USA she attended. All around Mobile, you see USA Jaguars displayed proudly.

A 2013 article in the MPR featured this quote from Joey: "I like being with the players and being around young people and trying to influence their lives," Jones said. "That's the bottom line of why I do this." To further pursue this, Joey speaks to churches, civic organizations, schools and athletic organizations. He also runs summer football camps for ages 6- high school, and takes players to visit at USA Women and Children's Hospital. He hosts regional Coaches High School Clinics yearly. In 2011, Jones was chosen to be inducted into the [Mobile Sports Hall of Fame](#), and he is a Member of NCAA Rules Committee.

Jones still considers himself a Murphy Panther. Let me give you one last quote from that MPR article:--"I just loved the Murphy football tradition back then," he said. "I was fortunate to be brought up in that and really cared about it. It was certainly a joy to play for the Murphy Panthers. "When I look at the high school scores, (the Murphy game) is always the first thing I'm going to look at." Welcome home, Coach Jones.