

January 15, 2015

Roland Tolbert is the 2020 Simplot Games Coach of the Year

By Taylor Meeks, ISU Student

Since the first Simplot Games was held in 1979, it has become a tradition to continuously invite elite athletes to the nation's premier high school indoor track and field meet to compete at a high level every February. As the popular saying goes, "behind every great athlete is a great coach." Every year, Simplot Games has recognized a coach that embodies what it means to go above and beyond for their athletes, and the 2020 Coach of the Year honor was given to Coach Roland Tolbert from East High School in Salt Lake City. Tolbert originally grew up in California but moved to Salt Lake City after his sophomore year of high school where he finished his education at South High School. Upon graduating, Tolbert received a scholarship to attend what is now Utah State University Eastern in Price, Utah. Growing up with seven siblings in a low-income home, Tolbert was the first boy in his family to attend college. Having that opportunity sparked Tolbert's desire to coach and potentially give other low-income kids the same chance. "One of the things I always promised myself was that I was going to give that opportunity to inner-city and low-income kids, and that's what I've done," Tolbert said. "I've focused on the inner-city kids, and I've stayed that way because this is where my love is, with kids I want to help and train." Shortly after college, Tolbert began his coaching journey at various high schools, including his alma mater, West High School, and eventually East High School where he is currently the head track and field coach and assistant football coach. "I've loved working with kids, and here I am today 35 years coaching," Tolbert said. "I started coaching high school in 1986 as an assistant coach, and I've probably been a head coach for 16 years or so." After meeting a man named Marcus Walker who ran a track and field club out of Colorado, Tolbert was inspired to fulfill his desire of creating a youth club of his own. So began the Cheetahs Track Club, a big source of pride for the Utah coach. Coach Tolbert created the youth track and field club in 1990 and has been coaching the Cheetahs athletes ever since. Another source of pride for Tolbert is his Tiny Tots Track & Field Meet for children ages two through 10 years old. "Twenty-one years ago, I started what I call the Tiny Tots Track Meet for my youngest daughter, who was three years old at the time," Tolbert said. "She'd always tag along with me and couldn't run because she was too young. She'd always cry and get upset, so I looked at her and said, 'I'm going to start a track meet for you.' It's kind of my pride and joy now. These two things are what I live by." Tolbert competed at Simplot Games in 1979, and since the start of his coaching career, he has been returning with his own athletes every year. He fell in love with the atmosphere and experience that

Pocatello and Simplot Games brings to him, his athletes, and his coaching staff. Being named Coach of the Year has been an affirmation to the East High School head coach that not only is he doing good things but his coaching staff and those around him are doing good things.

“It’s not just me, this honor is for the most important people around me,” Tolbert said. “I have a great staff, and they work as hard as I do. We all have the same goals, and that’s to help kids.” More than 2,100 athletes will come from across the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand to participate in the 41st annual Simplot Games. Simplot Games remains the nation’s premier high school indoor track and field event. Sponsored by the J.R. Simplot Company since 1979, the Simplot Games are held at Idaho State University’s Holt Arena in Pocatello, Idaho. For more information on Simplot Games, please visit our website at www.simplotgames.com. You may also contact Lisa Woodland at (208) 235-5604 or Simplot Games Media Team at media@simplotgames.com.