

## ***Officials Appreciation Week Profile:***

# **Lynne Clemente**

Lynne Clemente was raised in a sporting family, which means her upbringing covered a whole lot more than the games themselves.

“I was a competitive gymnast,” she said. “My father was a basketball and football coach and baseball umpire for over 40 years. I was raised to appreciate and respect the self-discipline, work ethic and gratification fostered by one’s involvement in competitive sports.”

Once her own gymnastic career was over, Lynne knew the ideal way of remaining involved in the sport she loved so much. She became a judge.

“I started judging gymnastics as a way to stay actively involved,” she said. “I presently judge NJSIAA, NCAA and USAG club gymnastics.”

It’s a role she’s had for the past 20 years. Additionally, she is the current NJSIAA gymnastics state rules interpreter and is the assignor for the Shore chapter.

She’s worked the NCAA Division 1 championship meet, as well as conference championship meets for the SEC, Big 10, Big 12 and MAC. She’s worked several other national meets, in addition to 20 NJSIAA state championship meets.

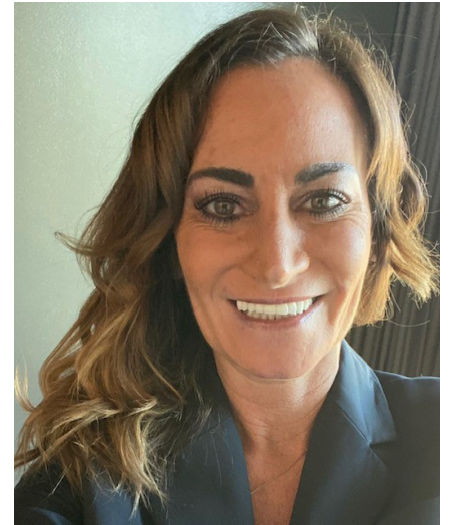
Lynne received a major honor this year when she was named the NFHS Distinguished Active Official of the Year for Section 1, a region that includes New Jersey, New York and all of the New England states. The award recognizes one person among all officials, not just those judging gymnastics.

“I take great pride in my job as a gymnastics judge,” she said. “I put a great deal of time and effort into keeping up with the current rules and trends, attending clinics, demonstrating the utmost level of professionalism, and working as much as possible at all levels and in all leagues. I was very grateful and honored to receive the NFHS Distinguished Official Award. It was also special because this particular award transcended gymnastics. It was nice to be recognized amongst all of the talented and dedicated officials, in all sports, within our region.”

### **Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Lynne Clemente:**

#### ***What do you do in your job as an interpreter and assignor?***

“As the state rules interpreter, I lead preseason clinics and meetings and then field questions and provide clarifications for coaches or judges throughout the season. I also serve as the Meet Referee at the Shore Conference championships, the sectionals and state championship meets every year. I also am the assignor for the Shore chapter, which has over 20 gymnastics teams. I enjoy working as a liaison between the coaches, judges, athletic directors and national rules interpreters.”



***What do you enjoy most about being an official?***

“Gymnastics is a beautiful sport, and every time I see a well-executed routine, I still get goosebumps. But I also enjoy the camaraderie and team spirit displayed by the student-athletes at the NJSIAA and NCAA levels. It makes me smile when I see the girls enjoying themselves, cheering for both teammates and opponents alike, and providing positive encouragement to other competitors.”

***Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?***

“My favorite memory is judging the 2022 NCAA Division 1 National Championship meet, which featured Olympic gold medalists Suni Lee, Jordan Chiles and Jade Carey - all of whom continued their competitive years in college.”

***What’s the best part about any given day of officiating?***

“Getting paid to watch gymnastics and support high school athletics is a dream. It doesn’t feel like a job, but rather a hobby.”

***Do you have any memories from your first meet as an official?***

“At my first sectional meet as an official, I was in a cast and on crutches, just a few days removed from ankle surgery. I injured myself while playing around on a tumble track at a local gym. That’s when I knew it was time to hang it up. From that point on, I immersed myself in judging gymnastics, and not actually doing it.”

***What’s the biggest misconception about the job of being an official?***

“Gymnastics is a sport where the official has to ‘judge,’ sometimes subjectively. Our job is to be critical and note all errors. That being said, there is a misconception that gymnastics judges are ‘mean.’ Although we are trained to recognize and acknowledge mistakes, we all still want to see the gymnasts succeed and be proud of their performance and their score. We all reward the positive aspects of a routine as much as we have to deduct for errors.”

***What would you say to anyone thinking about becoming an official?***

“I advise all former athletes or those interested in a particular sport to become an official. It is a rewarding way to stay involved and give back to the sport that you love. It is wonderful to see the hard work and dedication of young athletes come to fruition. And you will gain another circle of friends and colleagues who share a common interest.”



***Think you might be interested in becoming a high school sports official?  
Check out this link to learn more: <https://www.njsiaa.org/officials/become-official>***