

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

Robert Csigi

Of the tens of thousands of individuals who officiate high school sports in the United States, only one is recognized each year by the NFHS as the Distinguished Active Official of the Year.

The honoree this year is Robert Csigi, and he happens to be from New Jersey.

Not only is the honor very prestigious, he is only the third official all-time from the Garden State to receive the award.

“When I received the email from the NFHS, I had to read it twice,” he said. “I knew I was nominated for the award from my local chapter, but heard nothing until I received the final email. I was humbled and excited to be chosen. After it all sunk in, I can now reflect and say that there is nothing better than getting recognized for officiating excellence.”

His officiating experience is vast.

He has worked volleyball since 1984, which is the sport which led to the national honor. Among many honors, he was state volleyball Official of the Year in 2003, and has had a number of titles within his chapter, including Executive Board member, Cadet Supervisor and Treasurer.

He has also been a NJSIAA basketball official since 1981, and also worked NCAA women’s basketball from 1995 through 2020, where he officiated at the Div. 3 Final Four in 2006 and also handled Div. 1 assignments from 1998 through 2014.

He’s been a NJSIAA football official since 1980, and has received the James V. Rosatti Award, which is one of the most prestigious honors within the NJFOA-North chapter. He’s worked numerous playoff championship games, and served a variety of roles on NJFOA committees. He also worked several years as a NCAA football official.

Robert has also been a NJSIAA softball umpire since 1981, where he has received numerous awards, been assigned to several state finals, and has held numerous committee assignments within the Bergen County Umpires Association chapter.

He also worked as a NJSIAA soccer official from 1981 through ‘85.

Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Robert Csigi:

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

“What I enjoy most is helping student-athletes develop as adults. Those game experiences will mold them for the rest of their lives, and I’m proud to be a part of those experiences.”



Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

“My favorite experience was working the NCAA Women’s Div. 3 Final Four. The overall experience was amazing from start to finish. It was one that I will never forget, and I will be forever grateful that I was given the opportunity to work with the best.”

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

“The best part of any officiating experience is that you as an official have a major responsibility in the outcome of the game. Officiating each game with integrity and honesty have been my goal every time I step onto the field or court.”

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

“My first game was a fill-in basketball official in a JV game. I went to observe a friend doing a game and his partner did not show up. I was in the basketball cadet class and never did a high school game before. So, the AD asked if I would fill in. I borrowed a shirt from my friend and did the game. What an experience!”

Do you have a funny memory of an interaction between yourself and a coach?

“Doing a high school baseball game as the plate umpire early in my career. The head coach was questioning my strike zone all game. Late in the game, the coach called time out and walked toward me from the third base coaching box. I was prepared for him at this point. When we came face to face, I took off my mask and asked him aggressively, “What do you want to talk about?” He said calmly, “I want to make a substitution.” Lesson learned: Never anticipate what is going to happen, but be prepared for anything.”

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

“The biggest misconception is that officials don’t work at the game like players or coaches do. This is furthest from the truth. We are constantly being trained and working on our officiating skills. Once the players and coaches know how we constantly work at our profession, they have a better working relationship with us.”

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

“Becoming an official is not for everyone. You are right 50 percent of the time in the eyes of the players, coaches and fans. Becoming a well-respected and successful official takes work and dedication. But in the long run, there is no better compliment than when you hear from BOTH coaches prior to a game, “Glad to see you are on our game today.”



***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>***