

SPORTSMANSHIP APPRECIATION WEEK

OCT 18-24TH

Teams across the state have engaged in various acts this week to celebrate the first NJSIAA Sportsmanship Week.

One of the most popular forms for that expression has been to honor some of the most important people in high school athletics: The game officials.

Without their presence, which is too often taken for granted, competition would not be able to be held as we know it. In fact, it might not be able to take place at all.

Sportsmanship Week, which is sponsored by JAG-One Physical Therapy, is actually an expansion of NJSIAA Officials Appreciation Week, which was held for the first time during the 2019-20 school year.

Officials Appreciation Week has been a great success from the start, with teams saluting officials with gestures like cards, certificates, snacks, shirts and even a simple thank you during an age when their numbers are declining while verbal mistreatment from spectators is rising.

Teams in New Jersey, from Lacey to Watchung Hills, from Lyndhurst to Overbrook, Seneca to Hackettstown and plenty of places in between have honored officials as a part of Sportsmanship Week, which began on Oct. 18 and runs through Oct. 24.

One of those schools is Union Catholic, which has saluted officials at its home events throughout the week.

"It's important for us to appreciate and support the officials," Union Catholic soccer player Mike Minniti said. "They make the games happen and ensure that we are safe."

Officials also appreciate the thoughtfulness of teams, coaches and athletes throughout the state.

Gerry Davidove is one of the more active ones. He officiates volleyball, tennis, cross-country and track, is a football clock operator and also works the clock at hockey games.

Officials Appreciation an Essential Part of NJSIAA Sportsmanship Week

"It's always nice to be appreciated," he said. "Officiating is a great way to stay involved and to give back. It's also a good way to make some extra money, but the main reason anyone is doing it is for the love of the game and to support the athletes. There are plenty of things that guys on a football crew can do on a Friday night, but they love being out there."

Union Catholic boys soccer coach Tim Breza is thankful for the job that officials routinely do, and is glad his school made sure to recognize their work.

"Union Catholic is built around our core values of respect, responsibility, honesty, compassion and community as our guiding principles," he said. "We use these principles in all aspects of our lives, especially in athletics. Officials are a prime example of our core values and this is exemplified in each and every game and interaction we have on and off the field. They are our beacons of control on the field and allow our respective games to occur in the safest and most respectful way. We truly appreciate our officials."



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The Union Catholic and Roselle boys soccer teams and the officials show their support for [#SportsmanshipAppreciationWeek](#)

