

Officials' Appreciation Week Profile: **Maureen Dzwil**

Maureen Dzwil's background shows that there's always both a time and way to become an official.

After having her second child and working as a stay-at-home mom, she needed an outlet or job.

"Something different than thinking about mom stuff," she said. "I always wanted to coach field hockey, and someone recommended I keep updated about field hockey through officiating."

Field hockey season had just finished, so she decided to get started in officiating with girls lacrosse.

"My intent was to officiate girls lacrosse and field hockey one season and get into coaching. Well, I fell in love with both sports and the people who officiated with me. Thirty years later, I am blessed to still be out on the fields having fun, traveling, being mentally and physically challenged, but most of all, being part of my other family!"

In addition to her regular game duties, she is also the NJSIAA state field hockey assignor and the rules interpreter for girls lacrosse.

What do you do in your job as state assignor for field hockey and as the rules interpreter for girls lacrosse?

As the state assignor for NJSIAA's field hockey tournament, my job entails finding the best officials in the state to work the sectional and state final games. I work with the assignors from all chapters and get their recommendations on who is the most competent to work these games. I also work with the state interpreter to ensure those officials (working sectional and state final games) call the game consistently throughout the state. It is important the rules are interpreted and applied similarly at this level of play.

As the rules interpreter for girls lacrosse, my focus is ensuring all chapters in the state receive identical interpretations so the game is called consistently throughout the state. Any misinterpretations or questions raised throughout the lacrosse season, I email each chapter's interpreter with the correct answers, so all officials hopefully call the game consistently statewide. During sectionals and state final games, I work closely with the tournament director to ensure the tournament runs smoothly.

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

I love being out on the field hockey and lacrosse field, working as a team with my partner(s) and calling the best game possible. Keeping up with play and making the quick call helps me stay in shape both physically and mentally. It's a great challenge.



Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

Working with officials from another chapter during an important tournament game (North Jersey vs. South Jersey teams) and knowing we all called the same game. Tight game, overtime and finally one team won. The feeling that the players were in charge of the game and we only called what needed to be called. The best memory ever!

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

Working with officials from within or outside of my chapter. There's nothing better than being on a field with a partner(s) who has the same goal in mind, calling the best game possible. It's very similar to being a player on the field and working hard with your teammates for the win.

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

Oh yes... Trying to figure out what an "empty stick check" was, LOL! That darned foul took me the longest time to recognize, probably because I never played or had ever seen the game of lacrosse before.

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

It's true that officials can be abused verbally by fans, coaches and players, but there are ways to control that kind of behavior. (Cards, site directors, etc.) However, what most people do not realize is that we officials are a "family," and will support and lift each other up whenever one of us has a rough day. It's the most amazing part of being an official, the connectiveness and cohesion that comes when you are a "player with a whistle." Even officials from different sports are part of our family, we are one in all games.

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

What a great opportunity to have fun, meet people, travel, challenge yourself and potentially make officiating more than just a part-time job. If you love sports and are a team player, you will love officiating! There are so many levels to officiating and many jobs within the scope of each chapter. If you choose to move up the ladder and grow beyond high school officiating, the option is out there, especially for young people!