

## Officials' Appreciation Week Profile: **Rich Papperman**

Rich Papperman became a soccer official in an unusual way - he was coaxed into it by his son.

“My oldest son became a referee at age 14,” he explained. “I had played in high school and I thought I knew it all. After watching a game where my oldest son played goalkeeper and they lost, I criticized the referees. He said he thought that the referees did well, and if I thought that I could do better, then I should become a referee.”

Papperman took those words to heart, and worked to become a soccer official. He started as a U.S. Soccer Federation graded official in 1995, and by 2017, had worked nearly 4,000 youth and adult games for leagues and tournaments.



“I took the challenge almost 30 years ago, and it has been more rewarding than I could have imagined at the beginning,” he said.

He began working NJSIAA games in 1997, and has officiated numerous state finals. Since 2005, he has served as rules interpreter for the ACCSOA (Atlantic Cape Cumberland Soccer Officials Association). He’s held numerous titles within the chapter and statewide. From 2019-21, he was one of four regional assignors for the state tournament, and this year will be one of two assignors for the later rounds of the tournament.

Along the course of his officiating journey, he also became a U.S. Soccer Assessor, and a Referee Coach. Assessors/Referee Coaches watch the games of officials and provide them guidance to improve their game.

He was selected the NJSIAA Male Soccer Referee of the Year in 2015, and was a 2019 inductee into the South Jersey Soccer Hall of Fame.

### ***What do you do in your job as a rules interpreter?***

“As the ACCSO Chapter Rules Interpreter, each year I try to cover various topics - changes or Points of Emphasis (POE) to bring our chapter members up to speed. We also have other topics that arise throughout the season based on identified areas of need, usually identified by members.”

### ***What have you enjoyed most about being an official?***

“Having worked U.S. Soccer, NFHS and NCAA games for many years, it has been a journey to learn to be successful with each. Since many officials work hard to maintain fitness and knowledge of the Laws of The Game/Rules, it is always satisfying to finish games and know the players, coaches and spectators saw a well officiated game...even if they didn’t know it!”

***Do you have a favorite memory from officiating a game?***

“It was a NJSIAA boys state tournament game about five years ago with Ocean City vs. Timber Creek. I had the center and was working with a very good crew. It was 0-0 until about eight minutes remaining when Ocean City scored, making it 1-0. Then with about two minutes left, Timber Creek score to make it 1-1. After double OT, the game remained tied. We then went to kicks from the mark, and Timber Creek won. We had a low foul count - the kids came to play! Walking to my car, a coach I knew from another team complimented the crew and asked how many miles I had run. The answer was 7.25 miles. I’m not sure how the coaches felt, but I consider it one of my best games.”

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

“The camaraderie with the other officials, and often, sharing my knowledge.”

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

“LOL..., well, wearing the “cute” shorts and knee socks was a new experience.”

***Do you have any funny memories from your time as an official?***

“After working my way through U.S. Soccer and high school games, I looked to work college games. I was invited to attend a full day pre-season clinic - which was on my birthday. My wife asked what I wanted for my birthday. I told her that I wanted to attend the clinic. She said ‘Is that all?’ I already had a great wife and three great children. What more could you ask for?”

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

“How easy it is. Most have no idea about the amount of dedication, fitness or knowledge that is required, or the effort needed.”

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

“It can be an extraordinary avocation to gain so much - exercise and fitness, friendships, deep knowledge of a sport, the ability to give back to a sport, etc. It really helps to define the type of person you want to be.”

