

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

John Tosato

John Tosato is a man who looks good in white. And yellow as well.

During the winter season, he has plenty of opportunities to dress in both colors. On some days, you'll find him wearing the white shirt that goes with being a NJSIAA swim official. And on others, you'll see him dressed in the yellow shirt worn by those officiating track.

Tosato, a North Jersey native, is in his 28th year of working NJSIAA cross country and winter and spring track and field. And for the past 11 years, he's also officiated swimming.

During the winter season, it keeps him very busy, and also very happy to remain active in sports which have provided plenty of enjoyment throughout his career.

Take the current week, which happens to be NJSIAA Officials Appreciation Week, for example.

On Monday and Wednesday, he's officiating swim meets at Memorial High School in West New York. On Tuesday and Thursday, he's at Passaic County Tech in Wayne for Big North Conference divisional swim championships. And on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, he'll be in Toms River for NJSIAA sectional track championships.

"Every swim and track meet is a unique event," he said. "There are different facilities, time frames, events, teams, officials and responsibilities. It does not seem repetitious. I have to plan for each and look forward with anticipation for something new."

He has a strong background in both sports.

He was the coach of the cross country, indoor track and boys outdoor track teams at Belleville High School from 1981 through 2003. He was also head women's cross country coach at Caldwell College from 2003 through '09.



He's been a NJSIAA cross country and track official since 1996.

"I was encouraged to become an official by fellow coaches and school administrators that became friends during my coaching career," he said. "They also mentored and supported me during my first few years. Officiating is a natural transition from and has many of the same rewards as coaching. Each season brings you to some of the same schools and meets."



He's also spent summers managing a community pool for the past 20 years, which was his gateway into swim officiating.

"We have a very competitive swim team," he said. "The director of the summer swim league was in need of officials and encouraged me to join the NJSSIA Northern Swim Officials Chapter in 2013. This is my 11th season officiating and have been the chapter's Cadet Supervisor for 2 years. As with track, I am grateful for the continuous mentorship from fellow officials."

Getting to know NJSIAA sports official John Tosato:



John Tosato (second from left) is flanked by fellow swim officials Maggie Quintavella, Peter Ravettine and Phil Paspalas at a recent Big North Conference championship meet.

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

"By far the most enjoyable are the interactions with athletes, coaches and other officials. Answering a nervous athlete's question about a rule or the order of events and seeing them refocus on the competition. Observing an athlete's performance with a fellow official and being able to compare it to another athlete's effort that we both saw 20 years ago."

Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

"I had the opportunity to officiate a track meet last spring on a brand new track at my old high school. It was their first home meet in over 20 years! And the team is coached by one of my former runners. Last month, I officiated a swim meet for a brand new charter school - their first meet ever! The host team displayed outstanding sportsmanship by being supportive and enthusiastic."

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

"Knowing at the end of a competition that your efforts helped create a fair result and that good sportsmanship took place. Plus, as you are leaving, a coach or athlete comes over to thank the officials."

Do you have any memories from your early days as an official?

"I have had the pleasure of having a 'front row seat' observing outstanding New Jersey high school athletes who have gone on to compete in the Olympics or professional sports."

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

"One of the biggest misconceptions is that officials are constantly being judged and not appreciated. Officials work together to fairly oversee the athletic contest and ideally not even be noticed by athletes, coaches and spectators."

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

"Officiating was a natural transition from coaching for me and just as rewarding. Officials I work with are not just former coaches. They are former athletes, parents of athletes, college students, and retirees to mention

a few backgrounds. There is ample training in rules and procedures, mentoring, and an extremely supportive group of fellow officials. It is worth a look!”

***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>***