

## Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

# Jim Cohen

Jim Cohen grew up in Rockaway in Morris County, spending winter days playing hockey with his friends on the many ponds in the area.

“We only stopped when it got too dark,” he said.

He also watched many New York Rangers games on television, and the broadcasts back then featured color analyst Bill Chadwick, a retired pro referee known as “The Big Whistle,” who frequently told entertaining stories about his days in the sport.

Later on, Cohen got involved umpiring baseball and softball. Around the same time, he expanded his officiating duties.

“A co-worker’s husband was telling me about how he officiates for USA Hockey,” Cohen said. “He suggested I sign up since he knew I had a hockey background. I did that, and I’ve been officiating ever since.”

This is his 24th year officiating hockey, where his many assignments have including working NJSIAA championship games at the Prudential Center in Newark.

### Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Jim Cohen:

#### *What do you enjoy most about being an official?*

“The friendships I have made from fellow officials, players, parents, and coaches.”

#### *Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?*

“I have officiated many playoffs, tournaments, and finals. However, being asked to officiate the high school finals at Prudential would be a favorite memory.”

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

“Simply being on the ice, as each game offers something different. It’s a great way to stay in ‘shape’ without going to the gym.”

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

“Yes... a mite game (age 8/9) and the head coach decided he wanted to leave the game early via ejection. I didn’t know if I wanted to ref much longer, if this is how it’s going to be in a mite game. I was skeptical, but wanted to see how it would play out. Being an older ‘new’ official, I could deal with adults better than younger guys.”



***Do you have any particular funny memories of an interaction between yourself and a player or coach?***

“Too many to count.....which is probably why I still enjoy officiating.”

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

“That it’s easy to do and we are just there for the money. If parents, fans, and any other non-players understood what we go thru on any given weekend, instead of yelling, complaining, and so forth, they would be shocked at the commitment we make to their child.”

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

“Go for it. It creates a world of opportunity in so many ways and you find people who can help you in other parts of your life.”



*Jon Haczyk and Andrew Suhovic officiated the 2023 Public A championship game with Jim Cohen.*

***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>***

