

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

Mike Dean

Mike Dean offers proof that playing experience is not a requirement to becoming an official.

Dean, who has been officiating lacrosse for 20 years, was the 2023 New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association Official of the Year for boys lacrosse.

His start had nothing to do with being a player. Instead, it was rooted in being an involved parent.

“I never played the game,” he said. “But became interested when my daughter and then my son started playing in youth leagues. I was on the sidelines often, then started working the table keeping the time and score. One day an official came by and suggested I join their ranks. I was intrigued, and had become aware of their brotherhood of officials that I saw at tournaments and festivals.”

From there, everything fell into place.

“I went online and filled out the application,” he said. “I was accepted, and started attending classes, in person and not online, and discovered a real appreciation of what it took to officiate on the field. I was assigned varsity games immediately, and with the help of several experienced officials, I gradually got better, and have now been doing it for 20 years.”

Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Mike Dean:

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

“Being a part of the third team on the field, talking with my partners about the game and what happens in front of us.”

Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

“My favorite memory is the first Tournament of Champions game I officiated. The pregame meeting, walking on the field and then walking off knowing we had done a good job, and then meeting up with all of the officials in the stands who were there to support their fellow officials, all made for a memorable day.”

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

“The anticipation.”

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

“My first varsity game was in 2004, and I felt I was thrown into the deep end. But my partner was supportive



and my training in the classroom took over. I was left with the feeling that this was for me. The four officials who took an interest in me that first year are still some of my best friends: Ray Burow, Harry Noel, Trey Gelston and John Wilson.”

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

“The misconception I hear most is that we officials care who wins and have a favorite in the game. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

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

“After 20 years of officiating, I would tell any prospective officials to take the leap. The satisfaction and camaraderie you’ll experience will become a part of your life.”



***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>***