

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

Joseph Fussner, Jr.

Joseph Fussner, Jr. is one of those people who was destined to become a sports official.

But aside from following through on that path, he's also become one of the best softball umpires in the state, while also rising to Chief of Police in his home town of Ventnor.

"My father was instrumental in me becoming a sports official," the graduate of Atlantic City High School and Monmouth University said.

"He was the long-time recreation director for the City of Ventnor, where I grew up, as well as a high school and college basketball coach. One of my very first paying jobs, at the age of 14, was umpiring baseball, softball and basketball games for the recreation department."

His involvement continued on from there.

"As a child, I also served as a scorekeeper/statistician for my father's women's college basketball teams and then later with his high school boys basketball teams. Being directly involved in the management of those games, I gained an understanding of what officiating was all about."

Aside from being a successful coach, at both Stockton University and Atlantic City High School, Joe's father was also a decorated official.

"My dad was also a highly respected baseball and softball umpire for over 40 years," he said. "I saw the successes he had, as well as the dedication and hard work that he put into it, and how he viewed umpiring as a vocation. Having seen the rewards officiating provided my dad strongly influenced my decision to follow in his footsteps."

Working as a police officer has also helped.

"My professional career as a police officer also attributed to my success as an official," Joe said. "My training and experience in dealing with stressful situations, and interacting with people, provided me with valuable tools in managing the games I officiate."

He retired from his position of Chief of Police in Ventnor on May 1.

"I served the department for over 26 years," he said. "I am looking forward to the next chapter in my life."

Officiating will definitely be part of it.



Joseph Fussner Jr. retired as Chief of Police in Ventnor on May 1, ending a 26-year career with the department.

"I currently officiate basketball, baseball and softball at the high school level," he said. "Softball has turned out to be my preferred sport. I enjoy the speed of the game, and the fact that it's played on a smaller field."

He's a 14-year member of the Atlantic County Umpires Association, and currently serves as chapter Vice President. He's worked three state championship softball games, as well as a Tournament of Champions final.

He was the 2019 Umpire of the Year in his chapter, and was honored as 2024 Softball Official of the Year by the New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association.

Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Joseph Fussner, Jr.:

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

"Being a part of the game and the camaraderie with other officials."

Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

"My fondest memories are officiating high school games with my father. He taught me a lot, was my mentor in my earlier years as an umpire, and I owe my success largely to him. I will always cherish the several state tournament games we worked together at the end of his officiating career."

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

"The best part about any given day of officiating is the fact that we get to play a part in a high school competition, and watching the development of the various student-athlete's abilities."

Do you have a funny memory of an interaction between yourself and a player or coach?

"I have a lot of memories and funny interactions with coaches and players. It's what makes me want to continue officiating and one of the reasons why I look forward to my next game."

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

"Many believe that officiating is easy and that we all do it for the money. That is certainly not the case. A successful official is a student of the game, and spends countless hours reading rule books, reviewing video and speaking to other officials."



Joe Fussner (left) with fellow umpires Patrick Killian (center) and Joseph Rossi (right) before the 2024 South Jersey, Group 4 softball final.

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

“Officiating is a way to stay involved in a sport that you enjoy. It’s an opportunity to forge relationships and stay active. We are struggling for officials, and I would highly recommend it.”

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>