



Officials recognized at NJSOA awards event

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There's something that everyone should remember when it comes to high school sports competition - if not for officials, the events can not take place.

There are 282,000 student-athletes in New Jersey participating in 33 sports. But those competitions rely on the roughly 6,500 men and women who officiate those events.

Their efforts were recognized on Sept. 14 at the 4th Annual New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association Awards Program, in cooperation with the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association, at the Pines Manor in Edison.



"By serving today's Student-Athletes, you are making a difference in their lives," said Colleen Maguire, NJSIAA Executive Director, in her remarks to the honorees.

More than 35 officials were recognized, including four who received special honors.

Jack Iliff was recognized for being named NFHS Section 1 Active Official of the Year. He officiated football from 1978 through 2023, has worked track and field since 2005, swimming since 2005, and umpired softball for 15 years and baseball for two.

Distinguished Service Awards were presented to three individuals: Sue Ashnault (Gymnastics Official and Rules Interpreter), Cindy Beradino (Girls Lacrosse Official and Tournament Director) and Bob Nuse (Boys Lacrosse and Soccer Official).

The remaining honorees were recognized as Officials of the Year in their respective sports.

That group included Tanisha Cooley, a girls basketball official from the Central East Chapter. She began officiating as a way to earn extra income over a decade ago, and has risen in the time since to work multiple state championship games.

"Being an official challenges you in so many ways and helps to develop character," she said. "I feel that from being an official, parts of my character have been developed in a very positive way. It's so great to be honored here, and to also see officials from other sports."

Ed Glassheim was honored for his work in wrestling. An official from the NJWOA Union-Essex Chapter, he began his career in 1974, and has worked more than 40 district tournaments, over 20 regions, several sectionals and many state tournaments.

“To be recognized in any sport for what you contribute to athletics in New Jersey is amazing,” he said.

For all of those important matches he’s worked, he cited another as the most memorable. He was asked to officiate an exhibition bout between a senior who was autistic against a teammate. The autistic boy won by pin, and as he celebrated, the entire gym erupted.

“I’ve done thousands of matches and that was by far the most rewarding,” he said. “It showed how inspiring athletes are, and how impactful the job of being an official can be.”

Joseph Marateo was recognized for his work as a baseball umpire. A member of the Raritan Valley Umpires Chapter, he began his high school umpiring career in 2003.

“This is such an honor,” he said. “Especially to be recognized by my peers.”

He had a special lifetime highlight over the summer when he was one of four umpires from his chapter asked to umpire the Old Timers Day game between Yankees greats at Yankee Stadium.

“The one word that describes that experience was ‘Surreal,’ he said. “And that also describes the feeling of being recognized here today.”