

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

Paul Aiello

Paul Aiello grew up appreciating volleyball, even if at first he didn't have a chance to officially play it.

"I played tennis and soccer in high school at Saddle Brook High School," he said. "We didn't have boys volleyball back then, but I always enjoyed watching the girls play."

He still participated as much as he could, joining an adult rec league in town, and later intramurally in college at the University of Rochester.

"At some point, I joined a league for adults in New York City and that's where I started to learn the actual rules," he said. "I then went from being a volunteer assistant of the boys team at Belleville to becoming head coach the following year. I had an incredible team of young men and they did very well. Because of their hard work, I was named North Jersey Co-Coach of the Year by nj.com."

Soon after, he became an administrator in Belleville and was no longer able to coach. But he was able to watch, and after seeing something he didn't like, decided to act on it.

"I went to see my boys play in a tournament, and I watched the officiating," he said. "It disappointed me greatly. So I immediately went to the website when I got home to become a high school official."

That was in 2013. Since then he's worked on all levels - boys and girls high school, women's and men's college and club. He's also served in other capacities, like being the current vice chair of the New Jersey Board of Volleyball Officials, where he is in charge of ratings and evaluations of New Jersey college officials.

He is also the assignor for the NJSIAA girls volleyball state tournament.



He was recently honored as the 2024-25 Girls Volleyball Official of the Year by the New Jersey Scholastic Coaches Association.

"It's been an amazing ride, and I enjoy meeting up with people from all over the country soaking up technique, rules and mechanics like a sponge and making new friends," he said. "While I have coached many high school sports, I have only ever officiated volleyball. The NJSIAA has been super good to me."

Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Paul Aiello:

What do you do in your job as an assignor?



"I am the girls state tournament assignor. I help Ken Reynolds assign the North portion of the state because it's a huge job and I'm more familiar with the officials in the north. I love working on a team with him."

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

"The excitement of close matches, being able to watch such talented athletes perform day in, day out, and helping other officials improve to reach their own goals."

Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

"I was a referee when the West Caldwell Tech boys team won their first-ever state final in 2024. I was assigned them during the regular season and they were such a great group, that it was rewarding watching them achieve that milestone. Same could be said for the North sectional final between Verona and Kinnelon girls teams in 2023. It was an honor to be officiating that very exciting match."

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

"Getting to see the coaches and kids every day. There is always a palpable excitement on game day and it's just a nice atmosphere to be part of."

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

"Faint memory - my first scrimmage was in the old gym at Felician College in Rutherford. It was super hot and I worked with Dennis Wilbeck."

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

"That it's easy. There's a 'not-so-quiet' misconception that all officials want to move to do volleyball because it's indoors and we stand on a stand, don't move and it's easy. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is so much that you are responsible for seeing and knowing during any one play, including rotations, who is back row, where the setter is, and knowledge of legal ball handling. If you don't come from a volleyball background of playing or coaching, it's super difficult. And even then, officiating is a very different animal from playing."

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

"It will not come easy at first, but if you love volleyball, it's so worth it to join and be around. Fellow officials are usually very kind and a pleasure to work with, and there are so many avenues for volleyball officiating as the sport grows in popularity. We need so many, and I enjoy helping new officials acclimate to our sport. Come join us!"

***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>***