

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

Sue Ashnault

Quite simply, Sue Ashnault is one of the most important figures in NJSIAA girls gymnastics.

A former gymnast herself at South Plainfield, she later became a coach there before embarking on an officiating career that's lasted 39 years.

In addition to her decades as a judge, she's served on the NJSIAA Girls Gymnastics Committee, as a chapter rules interpreter and 11 years as the NJSIAA Gymnastics Rules Interpreter.

She also played an important national role by serving on the NFHS Gymnastics Rules Committee from 2004-2012, and also on the NFHS Gymnastics Rules Revision and Editing Committee.

"My passion for gymnastics started at a very young age, along with diving," she said. "I was very involved in sports growing up and throughout high school. While in college, I started to judge local gymnastics in North Carolina for spending money.

"After graduating, moving back to New Jersey and beginning my first teaching job, I also began my first year as a varsity high school gymnastics coach," she said. "The following year, I also coached swimming and diving. This led to my interest in continuing to judge gymnastics. I then began my gymnastic officiating and have been judging almost 40 years."

Along the way, along with her husband, Bill, she's raised one of New Jersey's most famed high athletic families.

In addition to daughter Carly, sons Billy and Anthony have achieved greatness in wrestling.

Billy was a champion at South Plainfield, a three-time NCAA qualifier at Rutgers and is now the coach at Christian Brothers Academy. Anthony is one of the greatest wrestlers in New Jersey history, having gone 170-0 with four state championships at South Plainfield, in addition to becoming the all-time winningest wrestler at Rutgers, capped by his winning the 149-pound weight class at the 2019 NCAA championships.



Sue also showed her dedication to the NJSIAA gymnastics that weekend. After Anthony won the NCAA title in Pittsburgh on a Saturday night, she made sure to fly back early on Sunday to attend the NJSIAA Awards Luncheon that afternoon in Princeton in order to accept a Service Award in person. Only then did she head to a Welcome Home celebration at Rutgers for Anthony which took place immediately after.

Sue has received several other honors, including a 2025 Distinguished Service Award last month from the New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association. She was one of only three individuals representing all NJSIAA sports to be recognized with that award.



Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Sue Ashnault:

What do you do in your job as an interpreter?

“As a past rules interpreter, I conducted clinics and workshops for judges in our state to update them with new rule changes and interpretations for the coming season. I also had the honor of being appointed to the NFHS Rules Committee for several years to represent girls gymnastics nationally and to help write and edit several rule books.”

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

“I enjoy every part of being a gymnastics official. The sport is always evolving, showing a balance of power, artistry, and elegance, which makes it beautiful to watch.”

Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

“My favorite memory is when I gave a very deserving ‘10.’ A perfect score.”

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

“The greatest part of officiating is being able to see young girls develop skills and perform them to the best of their ability. Being able to reward them for their expertise in the sport and their performances is very rewarding.”

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

“I was certainly nervous my first time judging a gymnastics meet. Thanks to being a coach as well as doing several practice meets, I was confident and took my duties very seriously. After the first few meets, my passion only grew deeper for the sport.”

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

“If you have a passion for gymnastics, consider judging. Take time to learn the rules, practice judging videos and be confident.”

***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>***