

## Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

# Kevin Kurzweil

It's hard to find an official anywhere who's gotten an earlier start using a whistle than Kevin Kurzweil.

How early? He worked his first ice hockey game when he was 11, and was certified as a USA Hockey referee at 14.

"I've been involved in hockey most of my life," he said. "I started playing at 6 years old with the Cranford Hockey Club and later played goalie for the Arthur L. Johnson High School team.

"At 14 years old, I began officiating ice hockey and I am proud to say that I have now completed 26 consecutive seasons as a USA Hockey official," he added. "I have also been a member of the Metro NY/NJ chapter of NIHOA for New Jersey high school hockey."

He was clearly serious about officiating from an early stage.

"From 2006 to 2008, I participated in the Junior Officiating Development Program, which gave me the opportunity to travel and officiate Junior level hockey," he said. "That greatly shaped my development as an official."

Kevin now officiates youth, high school, junior and college Div. 1 club hockey. He's also a volunteer officiating instructor.

"Doing that, I have the privilege of teaching and mentoring new and returning officials," he said. "This helps grow and strengthen the future of the sport."



Off the ice, Kevin has worked in emergency medical services for many years. At 16, he became a volunteer EMT.

"After high school, I attended Union County College and earned my certification as a nationally registered paramedic," he said. "I have been part of the RWJBarnabas Health system since 2006, as an EMT and paramedic. There, I also previously oversaw the EMT school paramedic program, and the American Heart Association training center."

He currently serves as Director of Simulation, where he designs and runs high-risk, low frequency training scenarios for nurses and physicians. Using high-fidelity medical manikins, we prepare healthcare professionals for critical patient care situations in a safe and controlled environment."

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He also founded and is current president of the New Jersey Association of EMS Educators.

Kevin and his wife Stephanie have two children - Jenny is a figure skater and Chris plays hockey.

He's also fit another interesting activity into his schedule.

"Outside of work and officiating, I was a volunteer scuba diver that cleaned the shark tanks at Adventure Aquarium," he said.

But near the top of Kevin's list is being able to give back to a sport he's loved from an early age.

"Officiating has allowed me to give back to the game that had given me so much."

### **Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Kevin Kurzweil:**

#### ***What do you enjoy most about being an official?***

"I really enjoy the competition between teams and the intensity that comes with it. When there are big crowds chanting and supporting their teams, it adds so much energy to the game. This makes officiating those games more exciting and rewarding."

#### ***Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?***

"One of my favorite memories was in 2024, when I had the chance to referee the Non-Public state final at the Prudential Center. It was a fast-paced game that was high scoring. The environment was also amazing. Being on the ice for a game like that and getting dressed in the old Devils locker room made it an unforgettable experience."

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

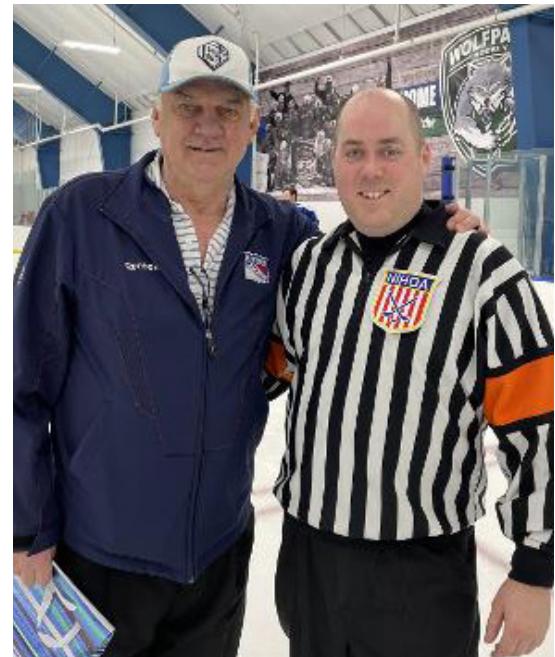
"One of the best parts of officiating is stepping onto the freshly cut ice and taking those first few laps before the game starts. It helps clear your mind and lets you focus only on hockey and leave everything else behind as you get ready for the game."

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

"I was 11 years old when I officiated my first hockey game at Warinanco Park and it was extremely cold. It was a full Mite C non-league game and the two officials working the game allowed me to put on the armbands and join them in a three-official system. They helped guide me through positioning and penalty calls. It was an important experience that got me interested in officiating and also learned what I needed to do to get certified."

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

"I don't have one specific funny memory that stands out, but I enjoy breaking the ice with players and coaches during games. I like to try and make people laugh, especially when games start to get intense. I think it helps



keep things positive and reminds everyone to still have fun.”

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

“A big misconception is that officials care about who wins and loses. In reality, we don’t care. We’re focusing on calling the game fairly and consistently. Hockey is such a fast game and sometimes our angle on the ice is different from what fans might see in the stands. We are trying to get every call right and with the best intentions.”

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

“I became a USA Hockey certified official when I was 14 years old, and officiating has taught me a lot both on and off the ice. You learn skills like communication and handling tough situations. It’s also a great way to stay involved in the game you love while getting paid to do 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>*