

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

Harry Noël

Harry Noël grew up in a large, athletic family in Maryland.

With that kind of background, it would seem likely that he was born with lacrosse in his blood. But that wasn't the case.

"I was the only one in my family of eight kids to play lacrosse," he said. "We were a family of runners, not lax players."

His participation in the sport continued past high school, and he played at Mount St. Mary's University in his home state. Years later, he began to coach his sons on the youth level when he began to drift toward officiating.

"While coaching, I thought I had a decent understanding of the rules," he said. "What coach doesn't think he is right and officials are wrong! Officiating live was a real awakening. It was more challenging than I thought. I had never officiated anything before but with the training provided, I was off and running."

Harry has been a lacrosse official since 2003. He's worked several state finals, and also on the NCAA level for 10 years. He's also taught the South Jersey cadet class for four years along with fellow ref Mike Dean.

"Officiating has its challenges, good days and bad, but it also has its own excitement that really got me hooked," he said. "My competitive side wants to always get better and the NJILOA has continuous training to help us provide the best refereeing experience possible. Throughout my years as a NCAA official and several seasons teaching a cadet's class in NJ, it has been a great experience."

Harry was recognized for his work last September, when he was named an Official of the Year for boys lacrosse by the New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association.

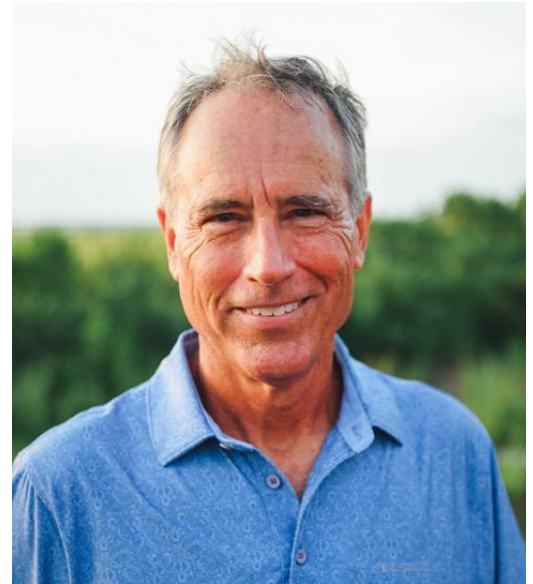
Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Harry Noël:

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

"It's the best seat in the house. I enjoy most being right in the action and in the moment. I enjoy the total focus required and never knowing what's going to happen."

Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

"There are many fun memories. One that I'm proud of was being on the sidelines a week after a big game and hearing parents talking about how great a previous game was with no mention of the officials, not knowing I was the ref on that very game. It's always a good thing when no one notices the officials. That usually means we're doing a great job."



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

“Without a doubt, the camaraderie you have with your fellow officials is one of the best things of officiating. Over the years, getting to know the coaches and players is rewarding as well.”

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

“I do remember my first game. It was with a senior official, Vince Boccanfuso. He taught me a lot and let me go out there and be independent and make mistakes. All good learning experiences.”

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

“How much fun it can be. When the game is well played, fast-paced, and competitive, there's nothing better and you're totally focused. It's a blast. Sure we take some heat for making calls, but usually 50 percent of the people agree with us on every call.”

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

“Try it. Get out of your comfort zone. You will be glad you did, and if you stick with it, many rewarding moments will be yours.”

***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>***