

News and views that inform, inspire, and connect the Drummond Island and De Tour Village communities and points west.

“Score!” Local Ref Makes A Difference

By Julie Covert

Jack Miles of Drummond Island, a three-sport veteran in his second decade as a registered Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) official, was selected this fall to officiate the 8 player semi-finals November 9th at Pickford and finals at Northern Michigan Superior Dome November 17th.

“Officiating is an honorable avocation that seeks people, both young and the young-at-heart, with strong moral character and integrity,” Jack Miles said. “Officials must be fair-minded, have the courage to make tough and quick decisions, and possess excellent people skills to build rapport and professional relationships with fellow officials, coaches, and student athletes.”

In a recent interview Jack explained that high school athletics across the state are running into a major problem – there are not enough referees. The Michigan High School Athletic Association has a shortage of officials. There are plenty of understandable reasons why officials leave the industry or, at least, decide to lighten their workload, but it leaves the kids with sports programs that may not have enough referees for all games. I decided to talk with him about his experiences as he wanted people to know it is a really great



way to be involved and give-back to the community and a terrific way for adults to still “play” their favorite sports.

Jack has been a registered MHSAA official in football, basketball, and baseball. He has worked the MHSAA Baseball Finals multiple times and has worked deep in the tournament in multiple sports. Jack has also umpired college baseball at the Division II, III, NAIA and JUCO

levels. He has been an incredible mentor to new officials in the Legacy program, bringing 28 new officials into the ranks over the past 5 years. Currently, Jack lives on Drummond Island and officiates in Eastern Upper Peninsula, as well as northern Lower Michigan. Jack has served our nation in the Army and is a proud Vietnam veteran.

How long have you been officiating?

20 years with the MHSAA.

When did you start?

1972 while in the service I started umpire youth baseball, adult basketball, and volleyball.

How did you get into refereeing?

I had been a high school varsity basketball, football and baseball coach. I decide to stop coaching to have time to watch my son play college football. One of the senior officials that refereed my game ask me if I wanted to make a little extra money, stay connect with the sports I coach.



Jack Miles, MHSAA Referee

What sports did you play as a kid?

I played youth football and baseball. While in the military played on post baseball, basketball and flag football of the post I was stationed at.

Why do you do it?

Giving back to the community, participate in games that I love, it gets me outside and is good exercise. Notice, that I didn't list becoming wealthy as one of the reasons to become an official. You won't get rich officiating high school football, but being a high school football official is a terrific hobby, especially for those who love football.

Why should others become officials?

If you have the time, energy, and patience you should consider it. It will likely be one of the greatest athletic experiences of your life.

How does one become an official?

It's easy to become an MHSAA Registered Official. The following steps will have you in the middle of the action in no time!

1. MHSAA.com You will be given detailed registration instructions and can complete your registration in a matter of minutes.

2. New Officials must take an Officials Guidebook Exam and complete a Mechanics Exam. Once your registration requirements have been completed, you will receive your Officials ID Number and Sports Rules Books from the MHSAA.

3. The next step is to be in contact with local approved association leaders in your area. Let them know that you are registered and looking for training/contests to work. They will be happy to hear from you!

4. Only one more step is needed to work. You've got to get in gear with the proper attire and equipment.

Does an official have to officiate all sports or can the person choose which ones they want? baseball, basketball, soccer, football, volleyball, etc?

You can officiate as many sports as you want or just one.

What are the personal rewards to coaching?

Giving back to the community and work with the student athlete. The brotherhood among official is second to none and earn a little extra money.

What does it pay?

It depends on the level and the sport you are officiating. A basketball, football and baseball official earns an average of \$60-\$70 for calling a varsity game. An official calling the shots at a freshmen or junior varsity game ranges from \$40-to-\$60.

How many active/current officials are there?

Michigan High School Athletic Association reports that there are approximately 10,000 officials in 14 sanctioned sports. Currently the state of Michigan and the county is facing a critical referee shortage. MHSAA officials has dropped from 12,700 to 9,800 over the past decade attribute to the decline to economic conditions and these other issues.

How many refs are minimally needed?

The sports where we have the biggest challenge recruiting are soccer, ice hockey and basketball. Wrestling also is really a challenge to recruit ,because unlike basketball and football, baseball and softball, most people don't understand the game. You don't necessarily have had to play it growing up to ref; sports like wrestling and ice hockey though, officials come exclusively from former players of the sport.

How many optimal refs?

There are never enough refs to go around.

How many games must a ref work?

You can work 7 days a week or once a week. It just depends of you and your schedule.

"The Michigan High School Athletic Association is aware of a lot of refs are aging out and they is trying to get younger people involved in sports officiating," said Jack Miles. "It's a chance for someone to make a little extra money. It's an opportunity to stay in the game as well, for those that played sports in high school. And it's a great way to give back to their community."

More information on the process to become an official can be found on their website at www.MHSAA.com



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Refs for the 8-player football semi-final and final games.
L to R: Jack Miles, Tony Immel, Joel Barnes, Brad Austin, and
John Carideo

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