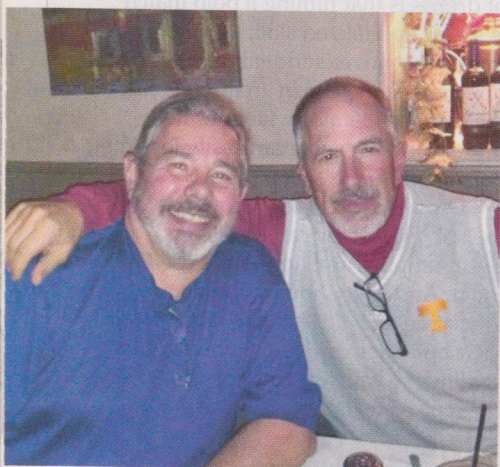


Brothers in Officiating Arms

By Tom Conroy

For years as an official and recruiter, Dan Weikle has sought ways to increase recruiting and retention to fill the ranks of sports officiating in Colorado. He recently turned to his brother Randy for advice. Randy has been recruiting for years as well, but for a different cause: Army recruiting.



Brothers Randy (left) and Dan Weikle are combining their military and officiating recruiting experiences toward increasing the number of officials in Colorado.

The conversation between the two brothers about recruiting began this past summer. Dan not only recognized the issue of finding new officials, but also with the various approaches to recruiting.

"When it comes to strategies, no one really seemed to have a clear-cut successful strategy," said Dan. "No one really knew how you find people and retain them."

Dan began officiating in 1975, with experience in football, basketball and baseball. He previously served as president of the Colorado High School Baseball Umpire Association (CHSBUA). From his perspective as both an official and recruiter, Dan has seen many of the difficulties of recruiting and the differences

between recruiting jurisdictions of state associations and local groups.

On top of the connection to his military brother, Dan was also instrumental in the formation of the Wounded Warrior Umpire Academy, an organization that provides training, mentoring and placement for military veterans interested in umpiring baseball and softball.

The Wounded Warrior Umpire Academy emphasizes the bonds and camaraderie of officiating as they relate to military service, something that Randy knows well. Randy served in the Army for four years and obtained the rank of Sergeant E-5 before he turned his attention toward recruiting. He faced the unique challenge of recruiting members of the original Delta Force unit.

"Because of the nature and purpose of Delta Force, the Army didn't want the recruitment to be public," Randy explained. "Recruiting had to be word-of-mouth from special forces groups. The Army wasn't super happy about the added visibility, but they ultimately needed more recruits for the unit."

Randy and Dan use that same personal approach today when recruiting new officials.

"Recruiting is not a canned process," said Randy. "In both military and officiating recruiting, we have to be enthusiastic recruiters in order to get enthusiastic recruits."

Dan and Randy have channeled their experience and enthusiasm into their recruiting efforts, which has had mixed results based on the approach. This has included advertising on TV and radio, handing out flyers outside baseball games and promoting on social media. According to Dan, the person-to-person connection has worked best so far.

"It's all about patience. We can't overestimate what can be done in one year, but we can't underestimate what can be done in five," said Dan.

Tom Conroy is Referee's assistant editor. □

Sisters in Stripes



Stefanie Jones and Amy Joostberns
Lansing, Mich.

Sisters Stefanie Jones and Amy Joostberns are two of only 14 females among the 2,356 registered football officials in the Michigan High School Athletic Association. That gender disparity may have been intimidating for others, but they were encouraged and mentored by their father, Tony Joostberns, a longtime MHSAA football referee.

Officiating gave both sisters an opportunity to continue being involved in sports after competing at the collegiate level. Jones ran track at Central Michigan, while Joostberns played basketball at Ferris State.

They are proud of changing the status quo as women officiating football.

"My dad kind of challenged me and said just because no one else has done it before doesn't mean you shouldn't," said Jones. "It's amazing to get rid of the stigma around that we're breaking down that wall."

SOURCE: LANSING STATE JOURNAL

Ref, Ron, Ref!



Ron Mousel
Age: 78
Grand Rapids, Mich.

For the past six decades, Ron Mousel has officiated in seven different sports, including basketball and volleyball, at all levels from youth to college. He began officiating in 1958 as a simple means of making money for college. He ultimately pursued a career in education and worked as a school superintendent, retiring in 2002.

"God put me here to work with kids and I love it," said Mousel. "You're doing what you're doing for the kids. That's my passion."

SOURCE: WOOD-TV 8

Do you know a person or group who should be profiled?

Send info to us at
profiles@referee.com