

The CIAC Officials' Association and You: Part 2

The CIAC Officials' Association was formed during the 2005-06 season. To give our members a better idea of how we as officials benefit from this affiliation, Bd10.COMmuniqué interviewed Joe Tonelli, the Director of the CIAC Officials' Association. Joe Tonelli, the long time (now retired) Athletic Director and former basketball Coach at Notre Dame High School of West Haven, has been inducted into the Connecticut High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame and received Board 10's Sportsmanship Award as well as the Babe Amendola Award. Part-1 of this interview was published last month. Here is the conclusion of the interview with Joe Tonelli.

Q: We talked previously about the incident reporting form and your reporting system as a way to gauge good sportsmanship – or the lack of it – at member schools. What else is the CIAC Officials' Association doing to promote sportsmanship, particularly for basketball?

A: Sportsmanship is something we're focused on, and it's a never-ending process that will require a major team effort on all our parts. The lack of sportsmanship, the lack of respect for the rules and for officials, is something we've seen more of lately. It's a byproduct of what kids see on TV when the colleges and pros play. They see certain behavior



Joe Tonelli, Director, CIAC Officials' Association.

on the court and in the stands and think it's acceptable at the high schools. It's not. So we've done a number of things. We've added material to our CIAC handbook with regard to sportsmanship. We have a brand new sportsmanship committee, and your own Mike Scanlon is a member of that committee. Earlier this year, they held a "Sportsmanship Summit". That event was attended by over 500 people, 300 of whom were student athletes. Others included coaches and athletic directors. The event included several workshops that addressed the relationship between officials, coaches, and players. It also

gave us an opportunity to talk to student athletes and encourage them to consider becoming officials. We also have on-line tournament packets for each sport which now contain material specifically relevant to promoting good sportsmanship. We're also going to have one week each season be "Sportsmanship Week". During that week, schools will have an opportunity to rate one another on sportsmanship issues. We're working on a mechanism for schools to rate officials and officials to rate schools on sportsmanship during that week. Built into this will be a rating system you can use to inform the CIAC about which schools do not properly promote or provide a good sporting atmosphere toward officials, or which schools have insufficient locker room facilities or are slow in paying officials. This information, plus the incident reports, will give us a clearer picture of which schools need to be addressed. It adds another measure of accountability. We think our combined efforts on sportsmanship will benefit you as officials, as well as all participants in high school basketball around the state.

Q: How else is the CIAC Officials' Association promoting the welfare of high school basketball officials and benefiting our profession?

I referred in the earlier part of the interview to opening up the lines of communication. One of the key lines of communication is between officials and coaches, and one of the complaints we used to hear a lot is that you couldn't get coaches to come to your annual pre-season meetings on rules. We've put the full weight of the CIAC behind the call to coaches to attend. And it's not just about understanding the (cont. on p. 10)

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rules and the rules changes. I sent a memo to all the interpreters asking them to explain to the coaches what the proper protocol is for coaches to discuss a call with an official, or if they have a serious complaint, how to address that complaint with the appropriate officials' organization representatives. There has to be a process for this to be done properly. We know what the forum for coaches' complaints should not be. It shouldn't be in the local media or in the official's locker room after the game.

This is another aspect to sportsmanship that we're trying to address on behalf of the officials.

Q: What about recruiting of officials?

A: We're very proud of our efforts here. We put together a recruiting committee. We have an excellent brochure. We've printed about 10,000 copies and we are getting a lot of mileage out of them. The response has been very encouraging. And we're using other venues – such as the Sportsmanship Summit -- to promote to high school students and others the idea of becoming a basketball official.

Q: What's the status of the officials' assault protection bill?

A: Frankly, it's a little discouraging. We came very close. We had probably 90 to 95% percent support among our state legislators. But we couldn't convince the powerful chairman of the committee that dealt with such legislation to get the bill out of committee and to a vote. His posi-

tion is that existing laws covering assault are sufficient and that we shouldn't single out or classify any particular group for special protection. But the fact is, some groups are already singled out and specially protected, and that includes the elderly, pregnant women, police officers, and firefighters. We strongly believe that officials need special protection and that, if you are assaulted as a direct result of your officiating duties, there should be an enhanced penalty. But, we're going to have to come up with a different strategy for dealing with the state legislature.

Q: What's the most important message you'd like to leave with our fellow basketball officials about the CIAC Officials' Association?

A: We need to work as a team – and we are doing that – for our mutual benefit in the effort to best serve high school athletics in our state. Certainly, promoting the best interests of officials is an important step in that direction. When we

started this organization, we didn't ask officials, "what can you do for us?" All we want is for you to be able to continue to do the excellent work that you have been doing in servicing our member schools. We want to know what we can do to help you and support your efforts. Having you on our team is a great step forward in solidifying that support. So, we're glad to have you with us and we hope you feel the same.

For more information, log on to:

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