

SDHSAA

Volleyball Newsletter

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CONGRATULATIONS NICK HUNTIMER- NFHS HIGH SCHOOL TODAY NEWS ARTICLE

A big shout out to Nick Huntimer who was interviewed by the NFHS about officials with hearing impairments. As you all know, Nick is great volleyball officials who has excelled in officiating the sport. Always great to see recognition of one of our own. I have included the article for your reading pleasure. Way to go Nick.

■ ABOVE AND BEYOND

Officials Find Success Despite Hearing Impairments

By Lindsey Atkinson

Sports provide opportunities for individuals to grow holistically – challenging the participant not just physically, but socially as well as mentally and emotionally. Success is then measured by their ability to withstand the challenges and perform regardless of differences.

Officials, many times, measure success by the level of competition they are invited to officiate. At the high school level, state championships are the highest measure of success. Like athletes and coaches, officials face challenges physically and mentally that they must overcome to achieve success.

Two officials from different parts of the country have persevered through physical challenges to reach the top of their games.

Nick Huntimer is a South Dakota High School Activities Association (SDHSAA) state finals volleyball official with experience as a basketball official and softball and baseball umpire who happens to be hearing impaired.

Huntimer, who was introduced to officiating through his fam-

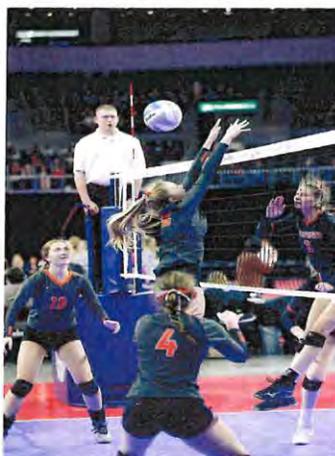
ily, considers officiating more of a family tradition than a hobby.

"It kind of runs in the family. My late grandpa, Tom Duffy, was a long-time SDHSAA football and basketball official," Huntimer said. "My mom's cousins, Gary Duffy and Terry Duffy, are also SDHSAA football, volleyball and basketball officials. So, I wanted to keep that tradition going in my family."

Huntimer understands that his hearing impairment creates some obstacles but faces them with humor and dedication to his craft.

"When I first started officiating right after high school, there were a few times that I worked with my second cousin and he'd tell me that I needed to blow my whistle harder," Huntimer said. "That's all good now."

While there are challenges to being a hearing-impaired official, Huntimer communicates how he adapts to the loud noises that accompany athletic events with the coaches, athletes and fellow officials before the match.



Photos provided by Jo Auch, South Dakota High School Activities Association

"In the pre-match conference, I'm able to talk and go over the ground rules, but sometimes the music is too loud and still going," Huntimer said. "However, once we get the coin toss for the choice, I explain to the team captain that if you want heads, make sure to point to your head. If you want tails, use your finger and wag it like a dog tail."

"When I work with the officials, we have really good eye contact when communicating," Huntimer said.

Eye contact is key to the success of hearing-impaired officials.

In fact, **Joey Hager** attributes his heightened visual awareness while on the field to his hearing impairment.

"Since I don't have 100 percent hearing, my eyes are more alert to things going on around me as I depend on my eyes more than a hearing person does," Hager said.

Hager, a 20-year veteran of officiating girls fastpitch softball, 19-year veteran of officiating boys and girls basketball and an 11-year veteran of officiating volleyball, is a former standout high school athlete in Michigan and now a state championship softball umpire for the Illinois High School Association (IHSA).

"I have played sports for many years and was an all-star in the state of Michigan for football and also played baseball and basketball," Hager said. "I enjoy officiating games because I enjoy being outdoors and most of all I enjoy games as I love sports."

Hager turned to officiating not out of family tradition, but out of necessity.

"I was working at the post office and got injured and was unable to return to work with the type of permanent injury I have," Hager said. "I had to think about what I could do for the future and to help with finances at home, so I decided to try officiating as I was pretty knowledgeable about sports."

Hager admits that sometimes there is reservation and weariness in the eyes of new coaches he meets at the plate.

"There are some people who have never had direct contact with a hearing-impaired individual and have no clue how to com-

municate, but I usually put them at ease and I do inform them ahead of time that they have to get my attention when they need to call out something during a game," Hager said.

Communication is essential to the success of both Huntimer and Hager. Pre-game meetings with coaches and fellow officials relieve anxieties about working with a hearing-impaired official. Eye contact and court/field awareness become their strengths and make up for any obstacles created by limited hearing.

For Huntimer and Hager, the best part of officiating is the memories they have created while giving back to the sports they love.

"I remember my first state volleyball tournament," Huntimer said. "I was so nervous prior to the first assigned match as the first referee on the first day between two good teams and it went to an exciting five-set match. However, I became more relaxed after being nervous at the beginning because I was working with such awesome officials."

To Hager, the personal interactions are what has stuck with him over his 20-year career.

"There have been a number of coaches and players that come up to me and try to sign to me as they are learning sign language at school or they have individuals in their circle of family or friends who are hearing impaired," Hager said.

These memories remind Huntimer and Hager that all the challenges they have faced as high school officials to reach the top of their game have been worth it. **HST**

Access current/archive articles online at www.nfhs.org/resources/high-school-today.

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NEWER OFFICIAL'S EVALUATION

I have had several questions about official's evaluations and the thought process to how these work. Many officials are concerned that while we have 16 new officials this year, if a "newer official" receives a "not so good" rating on the evaluations, why in the world would they want to stay? I agree with that thought process to an extent. Now at the risk of striking a nerve with some officials..... we, as veteran officials, need to make sure that the "newer officials" are ready for a VARSITY contest PRIOR to taking them to one! We do have a mentoring program to allow them the opportunity to develop as officials and I trust that we are not putting newer officials in a tough situation simply to "fill a contract". Officials, you are doing a disservice to "new officials" that are trying to learn the game, when we put them in that position. Now, don't get me wrong, there are "newer officials" that certainly are ready for that contest, as I have seen many that are ready. However, there may be some that need a little more time to understand the game, and will be great officials if we take the time to pre and post-match conference with them, and help them to get their questions answered.

If you do take a "newer official" to a varsity contest, it would be best to let the coaches and AD know that is happening, so maybe they can be a bit more patient in the match and potentially the evaluation as well. We all know that there is much to learn as a new official and we need to be patient with them, so they can grow to love the game,

just like you do. I am confident that if we can mentor and work with newer officials and help them to feel comfortable with the game, we will be able to keep them and help the sport of Volleyball to grow.

Coaches, if there is “newer” official working the contest, possibly try to be a bit more conscientious of the evaluation and try to help that official to improve in the evaluation.

OCTOBER CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

As many of you know, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Volleyball has many things they can do to promote the festivities for the month. I simply ask that we keep the integrity of “the game” in mind: if it is legal for the volleyball game, it is legal for “Cancer Awareness” night.

1. Uniforms may be pink, but would need to follow the uniform regulations as to number placement and manufacturer’s logo restrictions, etc.
2. Only one manufacturer’s logo and no more than 2 ¼ inches.
3. If your team is wearing “special uniforms” for the event, be sure they are legal and do not have advertisements or trademark/reference/logo larger than 2 ¼ inches.
4. Pink headbands and wristbands can only be worn if the uniform is pink! Remember the headband rule is white, black or the predominant color of the uniform.
5. Pink socks are legal, as are pink shoelaces. No adornments on the shoes!
6. **The game ball must remain the blue, gray and white ball. A pink ball will not be allowed.**
7. Many teams are wearing pink t-shirts to honor the theme of the evening during warmup, and then play in their school issued uniform.
8. Officials may use a “colored” whistle for the event and use a colored lanyard for the event. Otherwise, officials’ uniform shall remain in place as we have for other matches.

If you have any questions about your event, please call the office and ask prior to the event-taking place and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

UPDATE ON THE BLUE SHIRTS FOR VOLLEYBALL OFFICIALS

The volleyball officials organization has opted to add a blue shirt to their officiating gear. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to find a shirt that meets the specifications for both men and women, so we are pulling the reins back on the blue shirt until we find a shirt that will be feasible for all. Officials, we will continue with the white shirt and at this time, there is NOT a blue shirt available to purchase. When I have those details worked out, I will send an email for all to read. Thanks for your patience on this matter as we work to find a vendor.

VIDEO REVIEW

I am working with some other states to have some video for review and Colorado has so graciously opted to help me out. Here are a couple for you to review and call. Click on the YouTube video and see what you think.

#1 What Just Happened???

<https://youtu.be/vXEFcJa1zdg>

#9 on the right is obviously a front row player. Why did the R1 signal “safe” (should push the palm towards the floor in a single motion as well) when she put the ball over? Did you catch that the previous contact was an “overhand finger action” set by the Libero in the front zone?

#9 wisely stayed down below the top of the net and made it a legal play.

#2 Back Row Attack

<https://youtu.be/B0MM3nelj5g>

#14 on the right is a back row player. When she attacked the ball, was the ball completely above the height of the net? Was she on or in front of the attack line (white line)?