

Association Recognizes, Rewards Sportsmanship

By Greg Waxberg

Sportsmanship is a tremendously important aspect of athletics and the Inland Empire Football Officials Association (IEFOA) in Spokane, Wash., is doing its part to recognize good behavior by student-athletes.

The association implemented a sportsmanship award program in 2005 to recognize middle and high school student-athletes for good sportsmanship and fair play, based on how players treat their opponents, coaches, fans and officials. Every



Back row from left, officials Rick O'Connor, Spokane, Wash.; Greg Stevens, Colbert, Wash.; Jim Strom, Liberty Lake, Wash.; Ferris High School Coach Jim Sharkey; Dan Duncan, Spokane, Wash.; and Tom Reser, Spokane, Wash., stand with Ferris High School athletes, who received a sportsmanship award from the officials.

school in the IEFOA's service area is eligible, regardless of size or classification.

"We are lucky here," says Tom Reser, the IEFOA's Sportsmanship Committee Chairman who has been a referee for 25 years, the last 23 with IEFOA. "Our association has pretty good sportsmanship, and we wanted to start a program that would give something back to the teams, coaches and families, to say, 'thank you' for being good sports and reward good behavior."

Mike Strobeck, a referee in the association since 1977, agrees. "I see a lot of good sportsmanship on the field

among the players, many of whom know each other from other sports," he says, pointing out that he sometimes congratulates players for their good deeds. "You have to be careful as an official about complimenting the players, but I always try to do it to let them know that I am watching."

The state of Washington, in general, places an emphasis on sportsmanship, and organizations such as the Washington Officials Association and Washington Interscholastic Activities Association have been encouraging officials associations to promote sportsmanship in a tangible manner.

"We award the trophy to a team based not only on what the kids are doing, but also on the behavior of the coaches, fans and team personnel," Reser says. The IEFOA also takes into consideration the influence of coaches and families on the athletes and how the coaches and families espouse sportsmanship in the players.

Any official can nominate any team, and the IEFOA sends weekly letters and certificates to athletic directors notifying them that their schools have won the weekly award and are being considered for the annual award. At the end of the year, the sportsmanship committee considers the input of the nominating officials when voting on which team went "above and beyond." The only people who know the identity of the winner are the association and the athletic directors. The IEFOA then announces the winners at the association's end-of-the-year banquet and makes the surprise presentation at the winning team's award banquet.

"The parents and younger kids, like members of junior varsity teams, see it, so the award fosters more sportsmanship," Reser says.

Greg Waxberg is a magazine editor for The Pingry School, Martinsville, N.J., and a freelance writer. □

Basketball Officials Volunteer for Haiti Relief

Members of the Northern California Basketball Officials Association (NCBOA) volunteered their time for a basketball tournament last January to raise funds for earthquake victims in Haiti. More than \$1,000 was raised from the event to support earthquake victims. Some of the NCBOA colleagues who volunteered their time were: Mike Wong, Donald Lee, David Lee, Ray Hom, Warren Doo, Sean Engmann, Dave Djanikian, Randy Wong, Eric Tow, Rennie Owyang, Wellington Wong, Tami Cherolis, Marco Wan and Todd Zeo.

Mid-Michigan Umpires Donate Game Fees

Baseball and softball umpires from mid-Michigan pledged their first game fees in the month of May for the fourth year in a row toward the continued improvement of children's health care in their part of the state.

More than 125 umpires working baseball and softball games at 20 locations donated their game fee to Officials for Kids, a charitable initiative of the Michigan High School Athletic Association in conjunction with Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. The money raised will be used at the local Children's Miracle Network facility, Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, toward the maintenance of its pediatric emergency room and waiting room.

The Give-A-Game program has been used by different local officials associations around the state to solicit donations, and the initiative also serves to increase awareness of the Officials for Kids cause while generating public support for the Children's Miracle Network. The ultimate hope for the program is that officials' personal and association pledges, along with participation in fundraising events and initiatives, will make Officials for Kids synonymous with the improvement of children's health care across Michigan.

Have you heard an inspirational or motivational officiating story?

Send us your ideas to
GettingItRight@referee.com