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## BARB'S NIGHT OUT! TRUE PIONEER HONORED

By Mike Spencer

Barb Beckett still advises the Northern Sports Officials Association board members, assigns games and mentors younger officials.

"I doubt that I will ever step away completely," said Beckett, who decided last year to step down as the group's leader. "Being a part of the MHSAA and the NSOA has given me way more than I've given."

Beckett was honored for nearly three decades of service by her peers on Dec. 17 at halftime of the Traverse City St. Francis boys basketball game with Cadillac.

"Thank you for this," Beckett said during the five-minute ceremony on a bitter cold and snowy night. "So many people have helped me along the way and if I started naming some of them, I would leave some out. I know I would. "You know who you are. Thanks to my family, to Judy and all the officials here to support me here tonight."

The 34-year official received plaudits, a trophy and a bouquet of flowers from the association.

"Barb has been instrumental in mentoring, developing, and coaching officials to be the best they can be," said Bill Parker, who succeeded Beckett as the association's president. "She has always had a great passion for high school sports and her way to stay involved has been officiating and as a leader in NSOA."

"To be recognized by your peers is probably the greatest thrill that one could hope for," Beckett said. "It was a totally unexpected and a humbling experience."



"It was amazing to look up into the crowd and see a sea of officials and generations of grandparents, parents and children that I had officiated in my career."

Beckett is known beyond the local officiating fraternity. She was the first, and today is still the only female to officiate an MHSAA boys basketball final (1995). Beckett has also won the MHSAA's Vern Norris Award in 2000 and Women In Sports Leadership Award in 2013.

"Barb has been a true pioneer," said Mark Uyl, an MHSAA associate director. "At her core, Barb is a people person. The relationships that she has built with fellow officials, school administrators, coaches and student-athletes have been exemplary."

Uyl said he was not surprised to see Beckett honored by her fellow officials.

"It's a true testament of the kind of person Barb is," Uyl said. "She has blazed an incredible trail as leader in high school officiating. We need more people like Barb that are true advocates and supporters of those that officiate school sports."

Although Beckett turned in her whistle more than a decade ago, she is still involved.

"On any given game night, I still get phone calls from refs on their way home from a game, wanting to discuss a game or situation," Beckett said. "It makes me feel good that they want to share their stories with me or want my interpretation of a rule."

Beckett said she got into officiating because she thought she could make a difference and do a better job than those she had seen out on the floor. She wound up working numerous high-level basketball and softball tournament games. "The boys final was the best experience ever," Beckett said.

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"I didn't get any sleep the night before the game and I was never comfortable with all the attention of being the first female to work a boys final.

"I saw myself as being just another official, not a female official."

Beckett said she's always had the "greatest partners ever," and "they made me look way better than I actually was." Among the greats were Joe Lemieux, Tom Post, Kenny Allen, Scott Jones, Clint Kerr and "many more, too," she added.

As far as accolades, Beckett said she's not a fan of self-recognition nights. But she'll remember hers. "The NSOA is the greatest group ever," Beckett said. "Bill Parker and Mark Stewart (vice-president/secretary) are such class acts and made it an intimate but universal event at the same time."



## LEADING NSOA HAS BEEN A PRIVILEGE IN FIRST MONTHS

By Bill Parker

It is a great privilege to represent such a great group as the Northern Sports Officials Association (NSOA).

Our group is recognized across the state as an exemplary association. The main reason for this is due to the great leadership from your board for the past several years, even decades.

Training and education is the No. 1 focus of our association and it shows. Let's continue to raise the bar. Last month, I had the privilege along with other board members and fellow officials, to honor longtime president Barb Beckett with an award for her NSOA dedication and service. Although she has stepped down from leading the group, she continues today as a consultant, assignor and mentor. We are so grateful to have her in this role.

During my first few months as president, I have been very busy meeting with several schools and conferences about officials' issues. A big focus has been on officials' compensation.

As many of you know, the biggest football conference in Northern Michigan had several teams drop programs this past fall. The NSOA is working with the conference and schools on this issue.

I have also met with conferences and school districts to increase pay for each game. Many of you are seeing those increases in basketball already this season. Baseball and softball will also see an increase in the spring.

It was also a privilege to represent northern Michigan officials and NSOA in Lansing at the MHSAA officials Review Committee. This committee looks at various issues across the state. The same issues that we are facing here are also statewide. We are not alone.

Finally, I want to turn your focus to an issue of utmost importance – recruiting new officials. While our association membership is increasing, we need more recruits. If each member of the NSOA could bring just one person into our group, we would eliminate our shortage.

I challenge each member to talk with your friends, neighbors and/or co-workers about officiating. I will be discussing a recruitment program with the board at our next meeting. I will keep you posted.

As you can see, this second newsletter is expanded and improved. I want to thank Mike Spencer and Jeff Brunner for all their ideas and hard work on this newsletter and officials who agreed to share their stories. Hopefully this newsletter will be at least quarterly and will be informative and give members more of an insight on what officials do. If you have ideas for future stories, contact me or either one of them.

And thanks to each of you, for all your hard work and your dedication to make our association the best!

## FUTURE TRAINING SESSIONS SET

Basketball officials have two more training sessions to complete the 2016-2017 season. Meetings are scheduled for:

- Feb. 5, noon, YMCA
- March 5, noon, YMCA

Baseball officials training sessions begin next month. Meetings are scheduled for:

- Feb. 19, 4 p.m., YMCA
- March 18, 1 p.m., TC West
- March 24, 6 p.m., Benzie Central
- April 16, 4 p.m., YMCA

Softball officials training sessions begin next month. Meetings are tentatively set for:

- April, 18, 10 a.m., YMCA
- April 23, 10 a.m., YMCA
- May 7, 10 a.m., YMCA

## Official's Spotlight



### Jeff Lingaur Basketball

**Q: Why did you get into officiating?**

A: I have always loved basketball. This was a chance to see the game in many different venues.

**Q: What's been the hardest part of being an official?**

A: Knowing that no matter how hard these kids work, someone is going to lose.

**Q: What's been the highlight of your officiating career?**

A: In my first year, I worked my first three-man game in front of 1,200 people at Buckley's 100 years of basketball night. I was a little nervous.

**Q: What's one tip you'd give first-year refs?**

A: Don't be afraid to ask a question and let other officials help you out.

### Personal Favorites

Food: Mexican or Hibachi

Color: Blue

Movie: Lord of the Rings

Sports Team: MSU Spartan Basketball

Athlete: Ervin Magic Johnson

# THE ULTIMATE WHISTLE BLOWER – 4 DECADES AND STILL COUNTING

By Mike Spencer

Tom Post has been officiating basketball for 44 years.

And at 63 years young, he has no plans to stop blowing his whistle.

"I did some city league games in St. Louis and some junior high games when I first registered," said Post, recalling his officiating start. "I remember getting \$5 a game and I did three games.

"I still enjoy each game and I take pride in staying in shape and doing a good job."

Post, a three-sport prep standout at St. Louis, unexpectedly got his first varsity basketball gig in 1975 at Merrill High.

"There was a mix up and too many officials showed up," Post recalled. "The veteran officials took the money and left."

Post moved from mid-Michigan to Traverse City in 1978 and worked his way up to the varsity level. He hired a crew of junior varsity guys and a varsity partner and started working a full varsity schedule in the early 1980s.



*Tom Post, right, keeps a watchful eye and count as a Traverse City St. Francis player dribbles in the backcourt against Cadillac.*

Post not only helped start the Northern Sports Officials Association, he served as an association officer for years. He was the first assignor in Northern Michigan (the Big North and Cherryland conferences).

Post was also an MHSAA certified basketball trainer and served on the first committees for the MHSAA in organizing associations and training sessions.

"Tom is one of the NSOA's best known and experienced officials," said Clint Kerr, former NSOA board president/founding father, trainer and 31-year official. "Four and a half decades of basketball experience have made him one of the best officials in the state.

"Tom never gets rattled and regardless of the magnitude of the contest, he just goes out and calls a steady game that makes all involved feel relaxed and confident that the game is in good hands."

Post, a former junior high athletic director and Traverse City Area Public Schools retiree, is proud of the local association's recruiting and training efforts.

"I feel officiating in our area has become more consistent and better with our training programs," said Post, who feels newer officials should work as many lower level games as they can before advancing.

Today, Post also officiates girls softball. Prior to doing softball, he also umpired baseball.

"I was lucky enough to work many tournaments at the quarterfinal and higher level," said Post, who did a Class B boys basketball state final in 2005 and three softball finals.

"Thousands of fans know Tom from seeing him in the big games and they know that when he is on the floor, the game will be managed properly," Kerr noted. "I was very lucky to have worked with Tom for most of my 31 years and I believe I was a better referee as a result."

There have been many highlights in Post's officiating career. "Officiating allowed me to be involved in many great games, make many friends and memories," said Post, who had the pleasure of officiating with his son Mike in the mentor program and oldest son Ben in MHSAA varsity games.

Post, who stays fit by running, believes the statewide shortage of officials is because it's become more of a profession than a hobby for people to enjoy with their friends.

"There's a huge time commitment and a lot more scrutiny," said Post, noting tests, association attendance requirements and camps. "That makes it more difficult for younger people to do it unless they want to make it a job.

"The games are easy, but it is the time involved in getting there and time away from family that people may not like."

Despite growing concerns about sportsmanship issues in high school arenas, Post says sportsmanship hasn't changed much over the years.

"Sportsmanship is the same as always. Fans and coaches will always be emotional (as they should)," Post said. "But I do think schools deal with it better these days."

## Basketball Quick Quiz

**Q. When shall a five-second closely guarded violation be ruled?**

- A. When a closely-guarded player is holding the ball only in the frontcourt or backcourt.
- B. When a closely-guarded player is holding the ball or dribbling the ball in the frontcourt or backcourt.
- C. When a closely-guarded player is holding the ball only in the frontcourt.
- D. When a closely-guarded player is holding the ball or dribbling the ball in the frontcourt.

Answer: D

**Q. When may cheerleaders or other entertainment be allowed on the court?**

- A. During a 60-second or full timeout.
- B. During a 30-second timeout.
- C. During halftime intermission.
- D. During an electronic-media timeout.

Answer: A, C

**Q. When a team A player holds a live ball inbounds, who can request a timeout?**

- A. Team A's head coach, a team A assistant coach and any team A player.
- B. Team A's head coach and any team A player.
- C. A team A player only.
- D. Team A's head coach or a team A assistant coach only.

Answer: B



# THE FINALS STAGE: THE LAST HURRAH FOR IRWIN

By Jeff Brunner

As a veteran sports official, Traverse City's John Irwin spent many afternoons and evenings with a front row view of many of the top games and star players across northern Michigan.

Irwin officiated softball and baseball for 15 years, but he was best known for his 29-year career as a football official that culminated this past November with his selection by the MHSAA to work the Division 8 state championship game at Ford Field.

Irwin, who retired from officiating after the championship game, took a few moments to reminisce about officiating and how it has changed over time.

**Q. Why did you get into officiating?**

- A. I got into officiating because I loved sports and needed extra cash. I thought, what better way to make money then enjoying the best view of a game and getting paid too? After you've been an official for a few years, you realize that getting every call right and being professional about the way you do it is what it's all about. And letting the kids decide the outcome ... that's what's most important, not the money.

**Q. What was your favorite part of officiating?**

- A. My favorite part was seeing and feeling the competitiveness of the players, coaches and fans. I loved it!

**Q. What are some of the things that have changed the most in officiating football?**

- A. Judgment calls have changed the most. When I first started, there were a lot of judgment calls. For example, if a player was pushed out of bounds while in the air, you had to determine whether he could have come down inbounds. The rules changed, however, to make it easier on officials and make the calls more consistent. But now, with targeting and defenseless player rules, the state is bringing back judgment calls, and that makes an already tough job that much tougher. In my opinion it leaves officials at the mercy of fans – not an ideal situation.

**Q. What was it like officiating the finals?**

- A. It's an awesome experience. You are treated like royalty. You're put up in an 4 to 5 star hotel for two nights for free. At the field, you had paid parking and everything was very organized. We had a pregame conference with Mark Uyl. We had passes with access to all levels of the stadium. You could go up to the press box to see and meet sportswriters and coaches. Also, there is food and soft drinks available along with great seats to watch other games. It was a great experience. During my game, I also got lucky and made a great call on an incomplete pass – the receiver had one foot on back line, and I have the picture to prove it!

**Q. Did you do anything special to get in shape for a season?**

- A. I would work out four days a week from July until the season started by walking and running the hills behind the old state hospital.

**Q. Does a coach yelling or working the officials for calls have any effect on an official's decision making?**

- A. Coaches rarely bother me – I've thrown one flag on a coach in 29 years. I believe they're entitled to state their view of a play. However, it never changes how you call a game.

**Q. Is there any call that you still replay in your mind?**

- A. One call has always bothered me. It was Gaylord St. Mary against Unionville Sebewaing Area at Gaylord, last play of game, winner is in playoffs, loser is out. There was a run up the middle. We pinched in, but still had to unpile players to see if the ballcarrier made it into the end zone. I wish we had game films back then. Gaylord St. Mary won as we ruled him in.

