



Tenth Annual Game Official of the Year Recognition Program

2024-25 Award Recipients

WELLNESS

SPORTSMANSHIP

COACHES' EDUCATION

LEADERSHIP

COMMUNITY SERVICE





Tenth Annual **MIAA Game Official of the Year Recognition Program** 2024-25

Recognizing the highest standards of sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and moral character

This award seeks to recognize and honor officials who have displayed character, integrity and dignity, while displaying the highest standards of ethical conduct. Award recipients have a record of exceptional performance, as well as a reputation among their peers and the athletic community, for fair play, good sportsmanship, and the development of these attributes in our student-athletes.

5:45 pm	Reception and Award Recipient Pictures
6:30 pm	Welcome & Dinner Richard Pearson, <i>MIAA Associate Director</i>
7:15 pm	Keynote Speaker and Award Presentations



A Message from the MIAA Game Officials Committee

On behalf of the MIAA, and the Game Officials Committee, congratulations on being recognized as a MIAA 2024-2025 Game Official of the Year! This recognition is given to game officials who “have displayed character, integrity, and dignity, while displaying the highest standards of ethical conduct.” Thank you for your service, commitment and positive impact to our student-athletes, coaches and school communities.

Ask any student-athlete, coach, fan or athletic administrator and each will instantly identify that a game cannot occur without officials. As a game official, you play an essential and critical role in every sport, at every level offered by MIAA member schools. Officials bring order, clarity and standards to competition.

All of you have become game officials for various reasons, and hopefully have continued because of a genuine connection to the sport and the number of student-athletes that you directly impact. Being an official is not an easy job, it requires someone who is willing to take the challenge and display the poise and confidence required to effectively manage and enforce the rules of the sport. The job also requires that your responsibilities occur during intense competition, with an invested audience who wants to see their team do well. As officials you embrace this and perform a highly skilled job that is not for everyone.

Continue to challenge yourself, your colleagues and the participants, to be the best they can be. Continue to espouse the highest ideals in sportsmanship and athleticism. Lastly, continue your contribution to sport that helps in the growth of our youth, physically, mentally and emotionally.

The Game Officials Committee wishes to commend all of the recipients this evening on their accomplishment as “the best of the best.” Officiating in 2025 is not easy. The intensity around officiating has increased. It takes confidence, hard work, study and empathy to be a great official. Our recipients this evening have been exhibiting these attributes for many, many years.

With gratitude and sincere appreciation, congratulations and Thank You!

Avery Esdaile

MIAA Game Officials Committee Chair



2024-25 MIAA Game Officials Award Recipients

A Message from the MIAA Game Officials Committee

Avery Esdaile, MIAA Game Officials Committee Chair

Keynote Speaker

Ian McKay

MIAA Game Official of the Year Award

Officials recognized for their outstanding service to all MIAA student-athletes and for their commitment to the promotion of Educational Athletics

Baseball - Andrew Rogers

Boys Basketball - Cole McKenney

Girls Basketball - John Kreider

Cross Country - Helen Gregory

Field Hockey - Laura Laso

Football - Paul Sarno

Boys Ice Hockey - Joseph Flynn

Girls Ice Hockey - Steve Foley

Indoor Track - Patrick O'Connor

Boys Lacrosse - George Shaheen

Girls Lacrosse - Margaret Curtis

Outdoor Track - Brian Moody

Rugby - Michael Rudzinsky

Boys Soccer - Jason Dizek

Girls Soccer - Beth Lepore

Softball - Kathy Searl

Swim & Dive (Fall) - Kelly Pierce

Swim & Dive (Winter) - Chuck Nugent

Girls Volleyball - Ted Wilcox

Boys Volleyball - Jeff Zinchuk

Wrestling - Ed Barrett



Keynote Speaker

Ian McKay



Ian McKay is an accomplished soccer official at the high school, collegiate, national and professional levels.

Soccer Officiating Highlights

Professional

- NASL, NWSL, and USL Assistant Referee 2014-2019
- USL Assistant Referee of the Year 2019
- USL League One Final 2019 (Pro D3)
- USL Championship Final 2022 (Pro D2)
- MLS Assistant Referee 2019-Present
- MLS Assistant Referee of the Year 2023
- MLS Cup Final 2023

U.S. National

- Referee 2003-Present
- National Referee 2014-2016
- National Assistant Referee 2018-Present
- Lamar Hunt Open Cup Final 2022

College

- NISOA Referee 2011-2020

High School

- FHSAA Referee 2006-2009
- MIAA Referee 2010-2012



Andrew Rogers — Baseball

Hampshire-Franklin Baseball Umpires Association (HFBUA)

- 28 years officiating baseball in Massachusetts
- 27 years officiating basketball in Massachusetts
- High school assignor for baseball since 2004 and basketball since 2016
- Officiated numerous tournament and state championship games for the MIAA, NCAA and American Legion
- Received the Joao Rodrigues Distinguished Service Award in 2018-19 for his work contributing to sports in Western Mass.
- Human Services Director for South Hadley, directly overseeing the Recreation Department which works closely with South Hadley HS athletics and band

“Athletics has been my life! It is where I have met most of my good friends, whether as a student-athlete, official or in my job. Athletics gives us so many positive things in life; a chance to exercise, meet/socialize with others, chance to compete, learn life lessons and so many other things.”



Cole McKenney — Basketball (Boys)

IAABO Board 27

- High school basketball official since 2016
- College basketball official since 2021
- MIAA Final Four official in 2022, 2023, 2024
- MIAA Division 1 State Final official in 2025
- IAABO Board 27 Executive Board member
- IAABO Board 27 Special Olympics Coordinator
- IAABO Board 27 Volunteer Coordinator
- Undergrad and Master's Degrees from Northeastern University

“I believe athletics serve as a powerful platform to build community, foster character, and provide meaningful opportunities to give back. Through my work as a basketball official and as a mentor to new officials, I strive to create inclusive, supportive environments that encourage growth, teach teamwork and integrity, and inspire the next generation to participate, lead, and contribute positively to the game and the community.”



John Kreider — Basketball (Girls)

IAABO Board 27

- 45 years officiating basketball
- 50 years as member of IAABO 27
- Officiated MIAA State Finals in 2018 and 2025, 6 different State Semi-Finals and over 100 earlier round MIAA Tournament games
- Executive Board member IAABO 27, including training new officials
- Lives in Arlington with his wife Erin and their daughter

“I believe high school and youth sports should be about the athletes and trying to make their experience the best possible. All athletes have different skill levels and playing youth softball at 12 years old might be their last sports experience. When I referee high school sports, I want to allow the athletes to show their skill levels and not get in the way, but I know there are some games that have to be managed more closely to ensure they go smoothly.”



Helen Gregory — Cross Country

Mass Track & Field Officials Association (MTFOA)

- Cross country, indoor, and outdoor track & field official since 2008, having started as a Massachusetts official in 2014
- Officiated MIAA tournament meets yearly since starting in Massachusetts, including multiple State Championships and 7 All-State Meets
- Officiated Penn Relays, BAA Marathon Wheelchair Division, Falmouth Road Race, New Balance Indoor Nationals and a great many high school and college regular season meets
- Raised in Wayland, MA and competed in cross country skiing and lacrosse having graduated as the last class pre Title IX

“My philosophy of sport is an integral part of who I am. I have always loved to run, move, and play sports. I believe there is a connection between mind and body that is expressed through sport and movement. I enjoy seeing athletes compete. I strive to provide a welcoming, safe, and fair competition arena within the rules of the sport.”



Laura Lasa — Field Hockey

Boston Field Hockey Umpires Association (BFHUA)

- 40 years officiating high school field hockey
- Officiated collegiate field hockey for over a decade
- Softball official for nearly 20 years
- Has been officiating MIAA Field Hockey Tournament games in various rounds from 1995 through this past fall season
- Coached high school field hockey and worked at a number of summer developmental camps for field hockey in the 1980's and 90's

"My philosophy is simple. Athletics are a terrific venue for young women to build confidence and to learn how to play with and compete against athletes of varying abilities. Athletics are a great training ground for women to learn how to improve personal skills while learning how to push themselves beyond limits they had set. It is also a great arena to foster growth as a teammate and in teammates who may not have the same natural ability."



Paul Sarno — Football

Western Mass. Football Officials Association (WMFOA)

- 26 years officiating high school football
- Officiated collegiate football 2005 - 2017 working in both the NCAA Tournament and ECAC Bowl games
- Worked MIAA State Semi-Finals in 2021 and 2022 as well as MIAA State Championship games in 2022 and 2024
- Elected to Executive Board for WMFOA in 2015, rising to President in 2020-2021, and continues to instruct first time officials today (2017 - present)
- Officiated high school basketball and lacrosse for 18 years and collegiate lacrosse for 10 years
- Received Ronnie Abdow Award in 2017

"Apply the rules with integrity and impartiality. Be a lifelong learner of the rules deeply and with the knowledge to interpret them. Have respect for the game, coaches, players and fans."



Joseph Flynn — Ice Hockey (Boys)

Eastern & Central Mass. NIHOA

- 30 years officiating high school ice hockey
- Officiated Central Mass. Finals three times before statewide tournament was implemented
- Regularly assigned to MIAA Ice Hockey Tournament early round games
- Worked Division 2 MIAA Ice Hockey State Final at the Boston Garden in 2019
- Membership with both the Central Mass. and Eastern Mass. chapters of NIHOA
- Youth ice hockey coach for Triboro Youth Hockey, Minuteman Flames Youth Hockey and Northstars Youth Hockey programs

“Have fun, do your best in whatever sport you choose to do. Be a good teammate, treat others the way you would like to be treated. Treat your teammates with respect. I realized when I was older that I developed these through athletics. I started officiating ice hockey because I loved the sport and wanted to give back and realized that I missed the game.”



Steve Foley — Ice Hockey (Girls)

Eastern Mass. NIHOA

- 20 years officiating high school ice hockey
- Worked at least one MIAA Ice Hockey Tournament game every year for past 18 years
- Regularly assigned late round MIAA Tournament games including state semi-finals
- Volunteered with Tewksbury Girls Basketball program serving as president for 8 years
- Graduate of Austin Prep. and Merrimack College

“Good officiating is grounded in fairness and consistency, ensuring that every player competes on an equal footing regardless of skill level or team reputation. Strong officials uphold the spirit of the sport by communicating clearly, staying composed under pressure, and fostering an environment where players can grow in confidence and character. I believe that good officiating emphasizes safety and respect, protecting athletes while allowing the game’s intensity and passion to shine through.”



Patrick O'Connor — Indoor Track & Field

Mass Track & Field Officials Association (MTFOA)

- 28 years officiating high school track (cross-country, indoor and outdoor track & field)
- Nationally ranked USATF official since 2018
- Worked MIAA Divisional, State and New England Championships in indoor and outdoor track & field every year from 2012 to present day
- Several years officiating NCAA Championships, USATF Championships, New Balance Championships and the Boston Marathon
- Head high jump and pole vault judge at New Balance Nationals in 2023, 2024, and 2025
- NCAA Division 1 long distance runner and semi-pro athlete

“When I was a coach, I would always promote sportsmanship and the value of ‘life lessons’ through sport. Positive attitudes that teach and enable student-athletes to grow in a supportive environment. Being prepared physically and mentally for optimal performance has always been the goal...educating and always teaching the ‘why’ in training. I also have taken that mentality into officiating. I have become known for my ability to efficiently conduct the vertical jumps (HJ/PV) over the years.”



George Shaheen — Lacrosse (Boys)

Western Massachusetts Lacrosse Officials Association (WMLOA)

- 37 years officiating high school lacrosse
- Officiated lacrosse across all levels; youth, high school and high level NCAA Tournaments
- Worked MIAA Lacrosse State Finals in 1994, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2015 and 2017
- Officiated countless MIAA Lacrosse Tournament early round games
- Member of Executive Board for WMLOA from 1998 to present
- President of WMLOA 1998 - 2000
- Rules trainer, rules interpreter and new member recruiter for WMLOA

“Basically, I am happy to be part of the potential for young athletes to develop teamwork, responsibility, social development and life skills by being on the field to make sure they achieve these attributes.”



Margaret Curtis — Lacrosse (Girls)

Eastern Massachusetts Women's Lacrosse Umpiring Association (EMWLUA)

- 20 years officiating high school lacrosse
- 13 years officiating collegiate lacrosse
- Worked MIAA Girls Lacrosse State Finals in 2018 and 2025
- Officiated many early round MIAA Girls Lacrosse Tournament games for the past 15 years
- Officiated a number of MIAA Field Hockey Tournament games including a couple MIAA State Finals
- Participated on an MIAA Leadership Panel at Gillette Stadium in 2023
- Active community and church volunteer member

“In athletics there is a place of acceptance and tolerance for everyone. It is so important to create the mind, body and spirit to support integrity and sportsmanship to promote a community of friendship that allows a person to stay healthy in sport and life. To participate with a team is a gift, to play in the game is an honor earned by hard work and determination.”



Brian Moody — Outdoor Track & Field

Mass Track & Field Officials Association (MTFOA)

- 21 years officiating high school outdoor and indoor track & field
- Track & Field official at the collegiate level including the NCAA Division 2 National Championships in 2015 and 2017
- Regularly works MIAA Outdoor and Indoor Track & Field All-State Meet and Meet of Champions
- Executive Board member for MTFOA for 4 years
- USATF Nationally ranked official
- Assignor for several leagues in Massachusetts

“In track and field I like to get to the venue early and set it up, so as to avoid any delay during the event. Basically, I don't want the athletes sitting around for me. I want to start the event on time and move it along. Which benefits all the athletes.”



Michael Rudzinsky — Rugby

New England Rugby Referee Society

- Started officiating almost 5 years ago, having received his Level 1 USA Rugby Referee certification in 2021 and quickly earning his Level 2 certification just one year later
- Worked a number of MIAA Rugby Tournament matches in recent years
- USA Rugby Top 100 Referees
- New England Rugby Referees Most Improved Referee 15's and 7's in 2024
- USA Maccabi Rugby Captain, earning a gold and silver medal in 2015, a gold medal in 2017 and a bronze medal in 2022
- Signed to the New England Free Jacks in 2018-19

"My philosophy of officiating is to manage a fairly-contested match that aligns with the spirit of the game. Integrity, honesty, and humility will forever be important to what makes a successful official. The game is not about us; it is about the players, the coaches, and the fans. When I step between the lines on a rugby pitch, I am there to represent myself, my family, my referee society, and the sport of rugby, so doing that with professionalism and pride is important. Being accurate and making calls that are clear and obvious is also very important as an official, but in my opinion, consistency is key. In a rugby match, when I am able to find the perfect balance between the science of refereeing (technical) and the art of refereeing (contextual), I find it is more enjoyable for not just the players, coaches, and fans, but also, for myself. Officials should always show respect to the athletes and coaches, and even more importantly, to the sport that brings us together in those very moments."



Jason Dizek — Soccer (Boys)

Western Massachusetts Soccer Officials Association (WMSOA)

- 17 years officiating soccer at high school and USSF levels
- 15 years officiating at the collegiate level
- Officiated 9 MIAA Western Mass. Tournament Finals, 6 MIAA State Semi-Finals and 4 MIAA State Finals
- Worked many MIAA Soccer Tournament early rounds games
- Officiated 13 NCAA Elite Eight tournament matches in divisions 1, 2 and 3
- Newly appointed assignor for WMSOA
- Assignor for several local college soccer teams

"Athletics are a powerful tool, they force people from different backgrounds to work together to achieve a common goal. Athletics create friendships that sometimes will last a lifetime, sometimes bringing opponents together and creating a friendship that was unexpected. Athletics are not just about wins and losses, they're the experiences that can last a lifetime."



Beth Lepore — Soccer (Girls)

Eastern Massachusetts Soccer Officials Association (EMSOA)

- 5th year officiating high school soccer
- Officiated MIAA Soccer Tournament in each the past 4 seasons including the State Finals in 2022, 2023 and 2024
- Works as a mentor and instructor with the Massachusetts State Referee Committee and was named MSRC Instructor of the Year 2024
- Chaired the By-Laws Committee for EMSOA
- Has worked with the homeless population for 20 years primarily providing food and basic necessities during tough New England winters

“My philosophy of athletics is pretty simple: soccer is about more than just competition — it’s about respect, fairness, and the love of the game. When I step onto the field, I want every player to feel safe, included, and valued, no matter their experience level. Beyond the score, what truly matters is how the game is played, and I take pride in helping make every match fair, fun, and worth showing up for.”



Kathy Searl — Softball

Central Massachusetts Softball Umpires Association (CMSUA)

- 11 years officiating softball at the high school level
- 4 years officiating softball at the collegiate level
- Officiated multiple MIAA Softball Tournament games including State Semi-Finals in 2023, 2024, and 2025 as well as the Division 2 State Final in 2025
- Worked NCAA conference playoffs in 2022 and 2025
- Coached middle school and JV girls basketball in Douglas Public Schools for 15 years and served as the varsity assistant softball coach at Douglas High School from 1997 - 2006

“Being involved with athletics and young athletes is the most exciting thing that someone could ask for. As a coach or as an official you are helping them to grow a passion for the game. Helping them learn that hard work and discipline is an asset they will take with them for the rest of their lives. Teaching them the respect for the game along with respect for their teammates and officials and how dedication and hard work can be so rewarding.”



Kelly Pierce — Swimming & Diving (Fall)

Eastern MA Swim Officials Association (EMSOA)

- 22 years officiating swimming & diving, 12 years at the high school and collegiate levels
- Officiated MIAA Swimming & Diving Sectional and State Final Meets in both the fall and winter seasons from 2017 to present day
- Worked multiple NCAA conference championships from 2015 - 2025
- Community volunteer for several organizations including the Wayland Community Pool, Cambridge Boat Club, Good Shepherd Parish, Wayland youth sports and Wayland Public Schools

“Athletics are FOR EVERYONE. All children (and Adults!) ARE athletes and benefit tremendously from being involved in sports. The Physical/Mental/Educational benefits - well documented. Less tangible aspects of self-awareness, team before self, commitment, perseverance and belonging are life long, key impacts to overall growth in this human journey. My officiating philosophy is also simple - here for ALL the athletes and coaches to provide a SAFE, FAIR (and fun!) environment.”



Chuck Nugent — Swimming & Diving (Winter)

Eastern MA Swim Officials Association (EMSOA)

- 11 years officiating swimming & diving at the high school level
- 20 years officiating swimming & diving overall, including youth, USA and New England LSC
- Worked the MIAA Sectional Finals in 2024-2025
- Officiated conference meets at the collegiate level for 6 years

“Athletics are more than learning the skills of the game and competing. Athletics teach discipline and the value of working hard & perseverance to obtain a goal, and it can lead to lifelong friendships. Athletics teach that success is earned through hard work & resiliency when facing challenges and setbacks. They teach life skills like time management in the balancing of training, school work, part-time jobs and home chores.”



Ted Wilcox — Volleyball (Girls)

Western New England Board of Volleyball Officials

- 37 years officiating volleyball at the high school level
- NCAA National Official for 25 years
- Officiated numerous MIAA Girls & Boys Volleyball State Finals
- Worked countless MIAA early round Volleyball Tournament matches
- Member of MIAA Volleyball Committee for 10 years, serving as the Official's Representative
- Officiated dozens of NCAA Conference Finals and many earlier round matches
- United States Army, Military Police, retired

"I believe athletics are an extension of the classroom. The lessons learned from participating in athletics prepare students for their future endeavors."



Jeff Zinchuk — Volleyball (Boys)

Boston Board of Officials

- 37 years officiating volleyball at all levels, including recreation, middle school, high school, NCAA, and AVP USA National
- Officiated many MIAA Girls & Boys Volleyball State Finals
- Worked countless MIAA early round Volleyball Tournament matches
- Officiated dozens of NCAA Conference and Regional Finals and many earlier round matches
- Chair, Boston Board of Officials
- Vice-Chair, New England Volleyball Officials

"Organized sports allow individuals to compete with similar athletes. They provide a baseline for student athletes to work as a team, and rely on and support their teammates to achieve a higher objective than a singular accomplishment."



Ed Barrett — Wrestling

Western Mass. Wrestling Officials Association (WMWOA)

- 16 years officiating wrestling at the high school and youth levels
- MIAA Wrestling All-State official 7 times
- 9 time MIAA Divisional States official, twice serving as Head Official
- New England Championships official
- President/Treasurer Western Mass. Wrestling Officials Association
- Berkshire Humane Shelter - Family Volunteer of the Year
- 20 years volunteering for Special Olympics and over 12 years volunteering at the Bay State Games
- Wrestling coach from 1994-2008 and football coach from 1996-2008

“For me, officiating wrestling is about creating the kind of experience that helps athletes enjoy the sport and grow through it. I want every wrestler who steps on the mat to feel respected, supported, and confident that they’ll get a fair match. I try to bring a calm, steady presence that lets the athletes focus on competing while I take care of the details.

I also see officiating as a chance to teach. Whether it’s helping a young wrestler understand a rule, talking through a situation with a coach, or keeping a match running smoothly, I try to make each interaction positive and constructive. I’m always hoping that something I do, big or small, helps a wrestler learn, improves their confidence, or makes them feel good about being part of this sport.

And while safety is always on my mind, I want it to blend naturally into the match rather than dominate it. Keeping athletes protected is part of respecting them and part of giving them the freedom to compete at their best.

Ultimately, I want each participant to walk away from the mat with a positive impression of the sport. By promoting safety, fairness, and respect, I hope to contribute to an experience that keeps athletes engaged, encourages their continued involvement, and supports the long-term growth of wrestling within our communities.”



Thank you!



Our photographer for this evening

WELLNESS

to empower students to make healthy life choices

SPORTSMANSHIP

to teach respect for self, team, opponents, officials, rules, and the game itself

COACHES' EDUCATION

to provide resources for teacher-coaches who serve as curriculum instructors of educational athletics

LEADERSHIP

to promote the power of positive influence that student athletes and teacher-coaches share as role models

COMMUNITY SERVICE

to recognize the privilege of athletic participation and the responsibility of giving back to the community



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