

Mack Schaffer Is Most Popular Referee in State

Putnam County Sentinel – March 30, 1951

One of Ottawa's distinguished citizens – Mack Schaffer – again proved his popularity among Ohio's basketball followers last weekend.

Because of that popularity, Mack could be elected governor of the state or president of the nation, if that decision were left to coaches and players of high school basketball in Ohio.

Meeting in Columbus last week to select officials and make final arrangements for the Class A and B state basketball finals scheduled in the State Fair Ground Coliseum Thursday and Saturday of this week, the well known Ottawa referee was selected for the seventh time to officiate a state tournament, the last four years in succession.

That is an honor which has been conferred on no other basketball referee in the state, and by that token, it may be proclaimed that Mr. Schaffer is the best in the state.

When officials for the state tournament were being discussed, the Class A coaches and the Class B coaches went into separate huddles. The first name injected in the discussions among both groups was that of Mack Schaffer. As it is impossible for an official to referee both classes, the coaches got together and flipped a coin. The Class A coaches won the services of the Ottawa man. The same situation developed the previous two years - coaches in both classes with teams entered in the state tournament wanted the services of Mr. Schaffer. Each time, the flipping of a coin settled the question.

It might be well to state, also, that in those four years, Hamilton is the only school to be in on the choosing twice.

The selection of the Ottawa referee comes as a distinct honor. Mack not only has a fine and pleasing personality, a man who gets along well with coaches, players and fans, but is also recognized as an authority on basketball regulations. His trait of honest and sincerity, as well as his sportsmanship, are outstanding and orally recognized among the coaches, players and fans throughout the state.

Mac had his first experience as a referee in the state tournament in 1938. He was back again in 1939 and in 1941, before entering the U.S. Navy for World War II.

It was just five years ago on March 17 that Mr. Schaffer had both legs broken above the ankles. He was a lieutenant commander in the navy, a gunnery officer standing aboard a ship in Honolulu the day before he was to start his trip back home and be discarded from service, when he was swept overboard by a tidal wave.

He was hospitalized from March 17th to Labor Day. Nevertheless, Mack says, "They sure did a good job on me. Those legs never bother me now."

As proof of that statement, Mack has already refereed in 65 basketball games this past winter. He did 34 nights during the regular season, added eight games in the Mercer County tournament, nine more in the Celina protest tournament, officiated in the Central District Class A and two weeks ago, refereed three games in the Regional Tournament at Troy.

Now, in his twentieth year as a sport's official, Mack recalls many of the outstanding contests and the many little and new incidents that frequently arise. However, he remarks that the

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toughest game he ever worked was the Ohio State-Michigan football game last fall. This game was played in a blinding snow storm and bitter cold. With a grin, prayerfully and hopefully, Mack added "That will never happen again – I hope."

Mack recalled that he considered himself more of a broom man than an official in that game. "I had hold of a broom, sweeping snow off the lines, more than I did anything else," he commented.

He is a native of Melrose, Ohio, son of the late Mack and Minnie Schaffer, former Leipsic residents. He graduated from Leipsic high school, Bluffton College and took his masters degree at Miami University, majoring in chemistry. He lettered in football, basketball and baseball in high school and college.

Mack taught school for two years at Leipsic, eight years at Columbus Grove, and also coached football for one year at Sts. Peter and Paul school in Ottawa.

Mack's talents as a referee aren't limited to basketball. He's been on the Western football conference "accepted" list for four years. He also refereed the Indiana-Notre Dame football game last fall, plus Mid-Ohio, Mid-American, Ohio conference and a number of Ohio high school contests.

With that familiar grin lining his face, Mack also remarked, "Got kicked off the football team at Bluffton College in my senior year because I was a professional on the basis of officiating. I had to officiate or I couldn't have gone to school. I needed the money."

While teaching at Columbus Grove, Mack was married to an Ottawa girl – Miss Mary Elizabeth Long. They have a daughter, Cynthia Ann. Mrs. Schaffer teaches one of the first grade classes in the West building of Ottawa Public school.

In addition to his services as a sports official, Mack is a text book salesman for the Houghton-Mifflin company, a position he held for several years prior to his enlistment in the navy.

Another position filled creditably by Mr. Schaffer is that of councilman for the village of Ottawa. And here again, he meets those problems with an open mind, discusses them openly and freely and then bases his decision on the merits of the request or situation for what he believes is the best interest of the village for the parties concerned.

Incidentally, Mack is a candidate for reelection to the village council position again this year. We know he will be reelected because the home folks have the same high regard for him as the coaches and basketball players over the state.

It is ironic, that Mack worked only one game in the Putnam County Tournaments. In 1932, he did the championship game for the girls with H. I. Slocum.