Northeast Chapter #2 Volleyball Officials

Above the Net

December 2025 Edition 3

Welcome back, officials! We're thrilled to bring you the third edition of our newsletter, packed with insights, updates, and resources to keep you at the top of your game. This issue contains important information regarding rule interpretations, training opportunities, and association news. We encourage you to review it carefully. We are always interested in new ideas or suggestions! Let us know what you think!

Official Development: Time to Evolve Our Methods

As volleyball continues to grow in popularity and complexity, our officiating community faces an important question: Should we train officials the way we've always done it, or should we train them the way they actually learn best?

The landscape of education and professional development has changed dramatically over the past decade. Today's officials—whether they're teenage cadets or experienced veterans looking to sharpen their skills—have different learning styles, different expectations, and different needs than officials of previous generations. It's time our training methods catch up.

Over the last few months the Executive Council has discussed, debated, and explored opportunities for improvements in our cadet training and continuing education program for experienced officials.

The Foundation Remains Strong

Let's be clear: the fundamentals haven't changed. Mechanics and rules knowledge remain the twin pillars of quality officiating. You can't effectively manage a match if you don't know where to position yourself, how to move with the flow of play, or what the rulebook says about that tricky back-row attack scenario. These core competencies are non-negotiable.

Considering all of this, the ways we teach these fundamentals need to evolve. Reading a manual and taking a written test has its place, but it's only one piece of the puzzle. Different people absorb information in different ways—some learn best through visual demonstrations, others through hands-on practice, and still others through interactive discussion and immediate feedback.

A New Curriculum on the Horizon

Recognizing these realities, our association is excited to announce that we'll be launching a new training curriculum designed to meet officials where they are. This enhanced program will feature significantly more hands-on mechanics training for both cadets entering the profession and existing officials looking to refine their craft.

What does this mean in practice? Instead of simply reading about proper positioning for the second referee, officials will practice it on the court. Rather than memorizing hand signals from a diagram, they'll execute them repeatedly with feedback from mentors. We are looking to incorporate video analysis, live scrimmages with coaching, and scenario-based learning that puts officials in realistic match situations.

The best officials aren't just rule experts or positioning robots—they're well-rounded professionals who understand the game deeply, move instinctively, communicate clearly, and continue learning throughout their careers. Our training programs need to cultivate all these dimensions.

Mechanics Chair

We are pleased to introduce Paul Aiello as the association's new mechanics instructor. Paul brings extensive officiating experience across multiple levels, currently serving as a State Level Referee and National Line Judge with PAVO, a Regional Level Referee with USAV, and as New Jersey's State Rules Interpreter. He currently is the Vice Chair of the New Jersey Board of College Volleyball Officials, overseeing ratings and evaluations for officials statewide.

Paul has demonstrated exceptional leadership in official development, having coordinated and taught multiple training clinics, including the first-ever NJ State Line Judge clinic, an NCAA/PAVO evaluation session at Kean University, and off-season mechanics training sessions for our members with the SOS volleyball club. His experience spans high school championships from county through state group finals and extends to collegiate matches, including Big East competition. Paul is committed to advancing officiating excellence and sharing his expertise with officials at all levels.

Moving Forward Together

Changes like this can be challenging, especially in a community built on tradition and consistency. But evolution isn't about abandoning what works—it's about building on our strong foundation with new tools and approaches that make us even better. As we roll out this new curriculum in the coming months, we'll be providing resources, support, and opportunities for feedback. This is a collaborative effort, and we want to hear from officials at all levels about what's working and what could be improved.

Our association also needs your help. Experienced officials willing to mentor newer officials are critical to attracting and retaining members. Over the last 5 years our association has seen far too many cadets leave the program or drop out of the association shortly after completing their training. Lack of support and a feeling of isolation are key contributors to this attrition. If you are interested in being a part of the mentorship and/or training programs, please reach out to our training chair people:

- Cadet Program Supervisor - Peter Zubiaurre
- Assistant Cadet Supervisor - Fran Forenza
- Rules Interpretation - Sharon Hughes
- Mechanics - Paul Aiello

The future of volleyball officiating is bright, but only if we're willing to adapt our training methods to meet the needs of today's officials and today's game. Let's commit to being as dynamic and evolving as the sport we love to officiate.

"If you do not change direction, you might end up where you are heading." – Lao Tzu

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Officiating Ball Handling

Historically, high school volleyball officiating maintained strict interpretations of ball handling violations. Officials were trained to call any perceived double contact or extended contact immediately, creating a highly technical and often restrictive playing environment. The emphasis was on perfect technique rather than the flow and athleticism of the game. Any prolonged ball contact was immediately flagged. "Lifts" and "carries" were called very tightly with little consideration for the complexity of defensive plays. A technical violation of the rules was frequently met with a whistle stopping play and sometimes it was accompanied with a look of bewilderment from players or coaches.

Today's high school volleyball officiating strives to balance technical accuracy with athletic expression. Officials are trained to recognize the difference between advantageous illegal contact and natural athletic movements. This evolution has created a more dynamic, exciting game while maintaining the fundamental integrity of volleyball rules.

Changes in the rules and their interpretations have led to increased rally lengths and game excitement, and more players feel more confident attempting difficult defensive plays. With a greater emphasis on athleticism over perfect technique, a more consistent level of officiating can be applied across different skill levels.

The trend continues toward contextual officiating that considers the totality of the play rather than isolated technical infractions,. This allows young athletes to showcase their skills within a framework that promotes both fair play and athletic excellence. Understanding these ideas helps all of us become more effective and more respected officials.

Are these ball handling violations?

Rule 9.4.5: A legal contact is a touch of the ball by any part of a player's body which does not allow the ball to visibly come to rest or involve prolonged contact with a player's body

Tell us what you think

MARCH 16, 2026:

Chapter Interpretation and Mechanics Meeting via Zoom 7:30 PM

MARCH 16, 2026

Matches may be scheduled to start the boys season

MARCH 31, 2026:

Chapter Business Meeting and Elections via Zoom 7:30 PM

PAUL J. CALOCINO SCHOLARSHIP

HONORING THE LEGACY OF A PUBLIC SERVANT

In late 2024, former President Shawn Harris and current Executive Council member Kelly Cruz noticed that this association has a surplus of funds that had accumulated over several years due to the changes brought on by the realities of COVID 19. Their thoughts centered on using the money to find a way to benefit the members and members families. Kelly and Shawn presented to the Executive Council their idea of a scholarship to help defray the costs of higher education for the children and grandchildren of our active members.

Fittingly, they suggested to honor one of our association's long time member who had served the association and the community in so many ways. Paul Calocino was someone that everyone could look to as an example. He was an educator, a local government official, a multi-sport official, and, most importantly, a true gentleman. Paul faithfully offered his time to countless efforts connected to so many in his home town, across Bergen County, and with the members of Northeast Chapter 2 Volleyball Officials. Paul served on the town council of Wood Ridge in the 1980s and 90s, eventually serving as mayor for two terms ending in 1999. He was a long time professor at Bergen County Community College and had over 40 years experience officiating volleyball, basketball, softball and baseball. In our organization, Paul served in almost every leadership position including president and chapter interpreter.

This past November the membership overwhelmingly supported the creation of this scholarship and a permanent funding source to ensure the legacy of service that Paul had embraced will continue long into the future.

Members who have younger family members who are graduating high school are encouraged to learn more on the scholarship by reviewing the description and criteria on our website. More specific details will be coming shortly so keep an eye out for them.

Brags for the 2025 Girls Season

This page is dedicated to the top quality men and women of the Northeast Chapter 2 Volleyball Officials Association who have earned significant assignments in county, conference, and/or state tournaments.

Congratulations to all!

NJSIAA State Tournament

State Final Round

R1 - Ben Tanglao, Bart Brown

R2- Teresa Staats, Steve Mandraccia

Line Judge -Mike Boylan, Gail Pizzo

State Semi-Final Round

R1 - Gene Buerle, Anthony Sabia, Mark Dougherty, Ernesto Martinez, Glen Mezzatesta, George De Luna, Phil Mogavero, Omar Minaya

R2 -Bob Gambino, Charles Bell, Michael Vicchio, Don McManus, Richard Leftenant, Jairo Mendez, Paul Aiello, Anthony Manderano

Line Judge - Dwayne Jackson, Ben Tanglao, Charles Marakovitz, Donald Hard, Todd Larkin, Lawrence Manning, Leo Yanogacio, Pat Milano,Hector Diaz, Norbert Wnuk, Stuart Turner, Gail Pizzo, Jim Delamater, James Tolomeo, Mike McGovern, Frank DePalo, Bart Brown, Mark Halicki

Sectional Final Round

R1 - Kevin Kane, Don Vanderbeck, Ben Tanglao, William Newsome, Phil Mogavero, Stuart Turner, Mel Downes, Fran Forenza, Bart Brown, Anthony Sabia

R2 -Omar Minaya, Ernesto Martinez, Mark Dougherty, Anthony Manderano, MaryJean Hayek, Reggie Pantophlet, Jim Forenza, Gene Buerle, Steve Moskowitz

Line Judge - DMark Halicki, Gail Pizzo, Charlette Phipps, Michael McGovern, Howard Weshnak, Brian Quirk, Norbert Wnuk, Charles Marakovitz, Jim DeLamater, Paul Aiello, Katherine Criscuolo, Charles McGinley, Leann Rohlf, Donald Hard, Mike Boylan, Sharon Hughes, John Petela, Leo Yanagacio, Teresa Staats, Charles Bell, Rich Vito

County/Conference Tournaments

Bergen County Final

Fran Forenza	(R1)
Jim Forenza	(R2)
Ted Magda	(LJ)
Oscar Holder	(LJ)

Morris County Final

Misha Tsirulik	(R1)
Paola Morici Brown	(R2)
Steve Moskowitz	(LJ)
Charlie Bell	(LJ)

Union County Final

Mary Jean Hayek	(R1)
Lisa Matlosz	(R2)
Marge Theobald	(LJ)
Diane La Quaglia	(LJ)

Essex County Final

Aric Hall	(R1)
Paola Morici Brown	(R2)
Jim Zelinski	(LJ)
Cat Willie	(LJ)

Somerset County Final

Ayman Jubran	(R1)
Steve Mandraccia	(R2)
Len Adoff	(LJ)
Todd N. Walker	(LJ)

Hunt/Warren Sussex Final

Aric Hall	(R1)
Kevin Kane	(R2)
Teresa Staats	(LJ)
Bill Castiglione	(LJ)

Hudson County Final

Fran Forenza	(R1)
Jim Forenza	(R2)
Carlos Guzman	(LJ)
Bernardo Almonte	(LJ)

Passaic County Final

Glenn Mezzatesta	(R1)
Jack Phillips	(R2)
Richard Von Fischer, Jr.	(LJ)
Gail Pizzo	(LJ)

On November 6 a unique officiating crew took the court for a New Jersey state tournament match at Ramapo High School. The match featured not one but two married couples working together as officials: Jim and Fran Forenza (right), along with Carl and Charlette Phipps (left).

These two couples demonstrated the deep commitment and family involvement that exists within the volleyball officiating community in New Jersey

This rare pairing brought a special dynamic to the officiating team, combining their shared experiences both on and off the court to ensure fair play during the contest as Nutley fell to Ramapo. The Phippses and Forenzas were all grateful for the opportunity and wish to extend a special thanks to assignors Ken Reynolds and Paul Aiello.

Officials Appreciation Week

Every season The NJSIAA schedules one week per season as Officials Appreciation Week. This year it was the week of October 6-12.

Len Adoff at Clinton Twp Middle School

Rich Vito and Leo Yanogacio at Old Bridge

Kevin Kane and Teresa Staats at Hackettstown

Open Gym Training at Secaucus High School

This past August, in conjunction with Maria Nolan's summer camp, officials were invited to attend for some on court training with some of our most experienced officials including Don Vanderbeck, Tony Maldonado, Paul Aiello, and Janet Elder

Assigner Contact Information

Union County Conference
Kathi Savage (908) 868-0021

Skylands Conference
Walt Rusak (908) 295-9709

HCIAL (Hudson)
Fran Forenza (201) 248-2582

Big North (Bergen/Passaic)
NJIC (Bergen)
Sharon Hughes (201) 755-5617

Super Essex
NJAC (Morris/Sussex)
Tony Maldonado (973) 445-2277

NE Chapter 2 Officers

President - Kevin Kane
Vice President - Fran Forenza
Treasurer - Bob Csigi
Corresponding Secretary - John Gojdycz
Recording Secretary - Jack Phillips
Ex Officio - Shawn Harris, Sr

Ball Handling Videos

Video 1 is a ball handling violation! When the player makes contact with the ball his hand remains on the ball and he controls the action/direction of the ball rather than the ball rebounding off his hand. Any time players control the ball like this it should result in a violation being called.

Video 2 is not a ball handling violation. As the player makes contact with the ball it does not come to rest on his hand nor does he guide it. In slow motion it appears that it *may* be a ball handling violation, but it is not.

Both of these are great example of the subjective nature of calling ball handling violations in real time. Keep working on your officiating skills!