



# Above the Net

June 2026 Edition 4

Welcome back, officials! As we move into summer, we hope this fourth edition of our newsletter finds you energized and ready for what lies ahead. The season may be winding down, but the work of becoming a better official never stops, and that commitment is exactly what sets great officials apart.

This issue is packed with end-of-season reflections, rule updates to keep in mind as you prepare for the fall, and development opportunities to make the most of your off-season. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or just finishing your first year on the court, there is always something new to learn and a reason to keep growing.

Thank you for your dedication to the game, to the student-athletes who depend on your judgment, and to the integrity of high school volleyball. Your presence on the court matters more than you know. Here's to a wonderful summer — and an even stronger season ahead!

As always, we love hearing from you. Share your ideas, feedback, or stories with us. This newsletter belongs to all of us.

## A Year to Be Proud Of – A Message from the President

What a year it has been! As I reflect on everything our association has accomplished over the past twelve months, I am genuinely energized by what this community has built together. We didn't just maintain the status quo. We raised the bar. Across training, community, and recognition, we made meaningful strides that will shape the future of volleyball officiating in our region for years to come. Let's celebrate what we've done.

### Reimagining How We Train Our Cadets

At the heart of great officiating is great preparation, and this year we took a serious, exciting step forward with a brand-new curriculum for the mechanics portion of cadet training. This isn't a small tweak. It's a thoughtful, modern approach to teaching the fundamentals of positioning, movement, and court presence that every new official needs. Our cadets are entering the court better equipped than ever before, and that's something every one of us should feel good about.

To support this initiative and ensure it has the dedicated leadership it deserves. We established a Mechanics Training Chairperson and Committee. This structure means our training programs have a focused champion driving them forward not just this year, but in every season to come. It's the kind of organizational investment that pays dividends long after the moment passes.

### Getting on the Floor and Getting Better

Training doesn't stop after the cadet program, and this year we proved it. We hosted multiple clinics focused specifically on improving officiating techniques, bringing our members together to learn, to challenge themselves, and to grow. The energy at these events was palpable. Officials at every level walked away sharper, more confident, and more connected to the craft. If you attended one of these clinics, you know exactly what I mean. If you didn't, please make it a priority next year. You won't regret it.

### Honoring a Legacy: The Paul Calocino Scholarship Fund

Perhaps one of the most meaningful milestones of this year was the establishment of the Paul Calocino Scholarship Fund. This fund is more than a financial resource. It is a tribute to a dedicated member of our officiating family and a commitment to investing in the next generation. By creating this scholarship, we are saying clearly that we believe in our people, we honor those who came before us, and we are building something that lasts. I am enormously proud that we made this happen, and I know Paul's legacy will inspire officials for years to come.

### Coming Together as a Community

And then there was the member social. Yes, we work hard. Yes, we take our craft seriously. But we are also a community, — and this year we made time to simply enjoy each other's company. The member social was a reminder of why all of this matters: the relationships, the camaraderie, the shared passion for the sport that brings us together in the first place. If the smiles and conversations that night were any indication, we need to make this an annual tradition.

### Looking Ahead

None of what I've described above happened by accident. It happened because of you, the officials, committee members, volunteers, and supporters who show up, roll up your sleeves, and give this association everything you've got. Every clinic attended, every training session led, every dollar donated to the scholarship fund represents someone in this community choosing to invest in something bigger than themselves.

We have every reason to be proud. And we have every reason to be excited about what comes next. Thank you for an extraordinary year. Let's keep going.

*Kevin*

## Mark Your Calendars!

**JUNE 29, 2026:**

Packet Pickup at  
Bridgewater Raritan  
Middle School  
5:30PM

**JUNE 30, 2026:**

Rules Interpretation  
and Mechanics Meeting  
in person  
PCTI 6:30 PM

**AUGUST 25, 2026:**

Matches may be  
scheduled to start the  
girls season

**AUGUST 25, 2026:**

Chapter  
Interpretation and  
Mechanics via Zoom  
at 7:30PM

*"What is a master but a master student? And if that's true, then there's a responsibility on you to keep getting better and to explore avenues of your profession." – Neil Peart*

## 2026-27 Rules Changes

**4-2-1a, 4-2-1i(3), 4-2-2:** Libero uniform bottoms may be any color and no longer must match the team uniform bottoms.

**5-5-3b(21):** The second referee will provide a double whistle warning between sets at two minutes, 30 seconds (4:30 when intermission is used) instead of 2 minutes, 45 seconds

**6-4-2, 10-4-3a, 10-4-3d:** A team may designate up to two liberos, but only one libero can be in the game at a time. When a team designates two liberos and one is injured/ill, a new libero may be re-designated. When a team designates two liberos and one is disqualified; the team must continue with one libero.

**6-4 PENALTIES 1c, 12-2-8b NOTE :** If non-playing teammate(s) (bench players) enter the court during play it is illegal alignment. It remains a conduct violation if a coach or team attendant (anyone not in uniform) enters the court while the ball is in play.

**6-5-1:** Players on the serving team are not permitted to raise their hands above their heads during service until the ball has passed beyond the net.

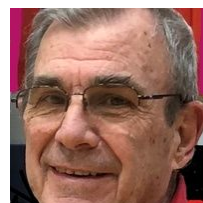
**9-2-1 NOTE 1:** Players shall not wear any audio or video devices during the match.

**12-2-8m:** It is an unsporting conduct violation if coaches, non-playing teammates or team attendants use props on the bench during celebrations.



## PAUL J. CALOCINO SCHOLARSHIP

HONORING THE LEGACY OF A PUBLIC SERVANT



The association scholarship was named in honor of Paul Calocino, a longtime member whose life of service set a standard for all of us. Paul was an educator, a local government official, a multi-sport official, and, above all, a true gentleman. He served on the Wood Ridge Town Council through the 1980s and 90s, including two terms as mayor, taught for many years at Bergen County Community College, and brought more than 40 years of officiating experience across volleyball, basketball, softball, and baseball. Within Northeast Chapter 2 he held nearly every leadership role, including chapter secretary and chapter interpreter. This past November, the membership overwhelmingly voted to establish the scholarship and a permanent funding source to ensure Paul's legacy of service endures for years to come.

Members with family members graduating from high school graduation applied and their credentials were reviewed by the Scholarship Committee headed up by Kelly Cruz.

We are proud to announce the recipients of the association's inaugural Paul Calocino Scholarship Awards:



**Grace McGuire** -, granddaughter of the late Paul Calocino, Grace will attend the University of Scranton this fall to study Occupational Therapy while competing on the women's softball team. A standout in soccer, basketball, and softball, Grace has earned numerous awards throughout her high school career and made a lasting impact in her community. Her dedication in and out of the classroom truly embodies the spirit of this scholarship. Congratulations, Grace!

**Alyssa Browne** - daughter of member Rachelle Browne, will attend St. Thomas Aquinas College this fall to study Film and Digital Media while playing on the women's volleyball team. Alyssa has shown a deep commitment to community service, academic excellence, and leadership throughout her high school years. Congratulations, Alyssa!

**Hailey Browne**, also the daughter of Rachelle Browne, will likewise attend St. Thomas Aquinas College this fall. Hailey has distinguished herself through exceptional community involvement, strong academics, and a consistent dedication to helping others. Congratulations, Hailey!



## Brags for the 2026 Boys Season

**Congratulations to all!**

### NJSIAA State Tournament

#### State Final Round

**R1** – Paul Aiello

**R2**– Omar Minaya

**Line Judge** –Jairo Mendez

#### State Semi-Final Round

**R1** – Paul Aiello, Ben Tanglao, Stu Turner, Jim McCue

**R2** –Anthony Giordano, Jairo Mendez, Lou Milano

**Line Judge** – Pat Milano, Bart Brown, Tom Hennessy, Leo Yanogacio, Ron Kasic, Lawrence Manning, LeeAnn Rohlf, Phil Mogavero, Kevin Flynn, George Dwyer, Charles McGinley



### County/Conference Tournaments

#### Bergen County Final

Fran Forenza (R1)  
 Jim Forenza (R2)  
 Michael McGovern (LJ)  
 Mark Dougherty (LJ)

#### Essex County Final

Janet Elder (R1)  
 Bart Brown (R2)  
 Gail Pizzo (LJ)  
 Dwayne Jackson (LJ)

#### Hudson County Final

Jim Forenza (R1)  
 Fran Forenza (R2)  
 Sharon Hughes (LJ)  
 Erin Murphy (LJ)

#### NJAC Final

Paul Aiello (R1)  
 Omar Minaya (R2)  
 Catherine Willie (LJ)  
 Teresa Staats (LJ)

#### Passaic County Final

William Newsome (R1)  
 Ted Magda (R2)  
 Jose Lopez (LJ)  
 Bob Gambino (LJ)

#### Skylands Cup Final

Gene Beulre (R1)  
 Steve Mandraccia (R2)  
 Bob Ebersbach (LJ)  
 Todd N. Walker (LJ)

#### Union County Final

Ben Tanglao (R1)  
 Jim McCue (R2)  
 George de Luna (LJ)  
 Bill Young (LJ)

One of the best ways to deepen your connection to the Northeast Chapter 2 Volleyball Officials Association – and to give back to the community that has supported your growth as an official – is to get involved beyond the court. Joining a committee is a great first step.

Our association relies on the dedication of volunteer members who serve on committees that keep our chapter running, growing, and improving. Whether your passion lies in developing new officials, preserving the integrity of our bylaws, or embracing the latest technology, there is a place for you at the table.

Here is a look at our current committees and their chairpersons:

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Attendance – Walt Rusak                 | Mechanics – Paul Aiello     |
| Cadet Training – Kevin Kane             | Scholarship – Kelly Cruz    |
| Constitution and By-Laws – Bob Auerbach | Technology – MiAngelo Moore |
| Grievance and Ethics – Mike Agnello     | Welfare – John Gojdyycz     |
| Interpretation – Sharon Hughes          |                             |

Each of these committees plays a vital role in the day-to-day and long-term success of our chapter. Getting involved is easier than you might think – it simply takes a willingness to contribute your time and expertise. If you are interested in joining a committee or would like to learn more about what each one does, please reach out directly to the committee chair listed above, or feel free to contact Chapter President Kevin Kane with any questions.

Together, we make our association stronger. We hope to see more of our members step up, get engaged, and help lead the way forward.



*You are the most valuable investment you will ever make!*

## Donna Guilbert Award

The Donna Guilbert Award was established as an annual award by the executive council of the association in 2011 to recognize a member of the organization who demonstrates outstanding quality, high moral character, top quality officiating and be held in high esteem by their colleagues, the coaches and athletes.

The 2025-26 recipient is Omar Minaya

Omar's journey to becoming one of our association's most respected officials is a story rooted in a lifelong love of volleyball. From his first season as a high school player to two decades as a coach, including stints at Passaic High School and Bergen Catholic, Omar has lived and breathed this sport in nearly every capacity. That depth of experience is precisely what makes him such a remarkable official. When Omar steps onto the court, he brings with him the perspective of a player, the patience of a coach, and the integrity of someone who has always put the game first.

Omar began his officiating career in 2016. That decision spoke volumes. After twenty years of coaching, he chose to serve the game in a new way and he has embraced that role with the same passion and professionalism that defined everything he did before it. On the court, Omar is known for his consistency, his composure, and his command of the rules. He believes deeply that athletes deserve fair and impartial officiating, and that belief is evident in every match he works.

What truly sets Omar apart, however, is the trust he has earned from those around him. Coaches respect him not because he is infallible, but because they know his decisions are grounded in training, experience, and sound judgment. Colleagues regard him as someone who leads by example, someone who takes the craft of officiating seriously and holds himself to the highest standard.

Off the court, Omar has been married for eighteen years and is the proud father of three children who have already begun to show an interest in the sport he loves. It is a fitting tribute to a life shaped by volleyball and a reminder that the values he brings to officiating are the same ones he has carried into every role he has held

It is that combination of knowledge, character, and humility that makes Omar Minaya the embodiment of everything the Donna Guilbert Award represents. Our association is proud and honored to recognize him.



## Don Casamento Award

Each year, the Executive Board of the Northeast Chapter 2 Volleyball Officials Association pauses to recognize one member whose dedication to the organization rises above all others. The Don Casamento Award, established in 2015, is the association's highest expression of gratitude. It is reserved for individuals whose contributions go well beyond what is asked or expected.

This year, that honor belongs to Kathi Savage, a pillar of this association and of volleyball officiating in New Jersey for nearly five decades.

Kathi's journey in volleyball began in 1977-1978, when she completed a Coaching and Officiating course at Kean College and simultaneously earned her collegiate and high school officiating certifications. With the exception of six years spent coaching volleyball and gymnastics at Cranford High School in the late 1980s and early 1990s, she has been a consistent and devoted presence on the volleyball court for close to 48 years. That kind of longevity speaks volumes – but it is the quality and commitment behind those years that truly set Kathi apart.

Beyond her work as an official, Kathi dedicated 40 years to education as a health and physical education teacher in Elizabeth and Cranford, and she channeled that same servant spirit into her community. During her final years at Cranford High School, she organized two blood drives annually that collected well over 300 donations per year. This remarkable achievement is made possible by her leadership and passion for giving back.

In 2018, she added another layer of service to the volleyball community by becoming the assigner for the Watchung Mountain Valley Conference in Union County, a role she held with professionalism and care through the Spring 2026 season.

The Don Casamento Award exists to shine a light on members like Kathi Savage – those who give generously of their time, knowledge, and energy without seeking recognition in return. Her decades of service to officiating, to education, and to this association represent everything this award was created to celebrate.

On behalf of the entire Executive Board and membership of Northeast Chapter 2, congratulations, Kathi. Your legacy in this sport and this organization is one we will long be grateful for.





## Court is in Session!



### Summer Volleyball at Harrison High School

This summer you have the chance to work on your officiating skills on court in the Harrison High School Summer League. Whether it's your first year or your 25th year, you are all welcome!

Members of the Association Mechanics Committee will be in attendance to help you with your R2 and Line Judge skills.

Matches run from 3:00PM until approximately 8PM, but you don't necessarily need to stay the entire time. The dates are listed below. All matches take place at Harrison High School.

Whatever time you can invest will pay great dividends

July 7, 9	July 14, 16
July 21, 23	July 28, 30

If you are interested, please use [this link](#) to let our Mechanics Chair Paul Aiello know you are interested.

### Tips from the Interpreter from Sharon Hughes

Here are some helpful hints for your pre-match duties:

#### Pre-Match Responsibilities:

- 🏐 Arrive 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of match in uniform
- 🏐 Confer with partner to review ground rules
- 🏐 Identify host management
- 🏐 Check equipment & padding
- 🏐 Check net height & tension
- 🏐 Inspect game balls & check for proper inflation - (4.3-4.6 PSI)
- 🏐 Check Referee stand to ensure safety
- 🏐 Meet with line judges, scorer, timer & libero tracker to review duties

#### Pre-Match Conference:

- 🏐 Introduction of captains & coaches to each other & officials
- 🏐 Ask coaches if their players are legally & properly equipped
- 🏐 Ask coaches if they will be switching benches or staying put
- 🏐 Review of new equipment & uniform rules
- 🏐 Review local ground rules & establish playing area
- 🏐 Remind players to play to the whistle
- 🏐 Remind floor captains only can approach the R1
- 🏐 Coin toss with visiting team calling the toss in the air. DO NOT TURN COIN OVER
- 🏐 Winner of toss chooses serve or receive
- 🏐 Coach submits roster to the R2
- 🏐 Remind coaches to submit their line-up at least 2 minutes prior to start of match
- 🏐 The home team warms up first, then the visiting team
- 🏐 Wish each team good luck
- 🏐 Report to the scorer, which team is serving first



### Assigner Contact Information



#### Union County Conference

Marge Theobald (201) 819-1009  
Tom Burke (973) 296-9896

#### 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 Gojdydz  
Recording Secretary - Jack Phillips  
Ex Officio - Shawn Harris, Sr

#### NJSIAA Conflict of Interest Policy

Officials must remain highly vigilant and adhere strictly to the NJSIAA conflict of interest policy when accepting officiating assignments. This is especially critical for officials who also coach (in any capacity) the same sport they officiate in, as this may present an increased risk of perceived or actual conflicts. In Addition, any personal or professional relationship that creates even the appearance of a conflict of interest must be avoided.

Do not accept any assignments if any of the following apply to you:

1. You are currently employed in the school district.
  2. You have been employed in the district within the past 10 years.
  3. You have a close relative who is employed in the district.
  4. You have a child attending any school within the district.
- Please Note: The list above does not include all potential conflicts