

HISTORY OF THE WNYCFO, INC.

2025 marked the 100th Anniversary of the Western New York Chapter, Inc. of the New York State Association of Certified Football Officials, Inc. (NYSACFO). In 1925 there were three Football Officials groups – Buffalo, Syracuse, and Capital District - that met in Syracuse and formed the NYSACFO. This organization has grown to where there are now 19 Chapters to cover high school football across all of New York State.

When the Chapter was formed its basic purpose was “to work with and be of service to the schools and other groups interested in football.” Today that is still the number one priority of our Chapter. We know that there was a group that officiated high school football in Western New York before 1925 – the Buffalo Officials, who were one of the founding members of the NYSACFO – but there is very little to document except that “officials were present for the contest.” There is very little to be found until the late 1940’s and there were two major events – the Great Depression and World War II – that took center stage and disrupted normal life for a large portion of our Chapter’s first 25 years.

Uniforms in those early years were white “bakers” pants, white long-sleeved shirts, a black bow tie, and a light colored flat styled “newsboy” cap. White knickers replaced white pants in the late 1930’s and those were worn with different types of socks until 2010 when the current black pants were mandated. The black and white striped shirt made its appearance in the late 1920’s but wasn’t made mandatory until around 1941. Today our Chapter wears a striped shirt with two and 1/4-inch-wide stripes. Although the “newsboy” cap remained, its color changed (red and then black) it was replaced in 1947 for all members of a game crew to the baseball styled cap that is worn today.

Penalties were declared by blowing a horn that was strapped to the official’s wrist. In the early days of our Chapter only the Referee was equipped with a whistle. That was used to signal the start of play. When a runner was tackled, he was required to shout out “Down” to end the play! Eventually that changed. Along with the mandatory use of penalty flags, all officials were now required to use the whistle. The penalty flag was first used in 1941 and then became the standard in 1948 when its color was red. The color of the flag was changed to yellow in 1966 – interesting the change was requested to enhance the viewing experience of football fans watching the games on the newly popular color television sets.

In 1946 there were two groups of officials working at high school football games in Western New York. After some prodding by NYSACFO, the two groups merged under the WNYCFO banner in 1949. It was also during this era that the schools were starting to become more structured concerning athletics. The Niagara Frontier League (1937), the Monsignor Martin Athletic Association (1948) and the Erie County Interscholastic Conference (1952) all came into being during that time. Also, Section VI of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (which dates to 1923) began to grow with the influx of schools. Obviously, the need for sports officials grew to be able to serve those schools.

A major component of that growth was the willingness of the senior Members of the WNYCFO to train and guide the next generation of Officials.

These men included:

1940's / 1950's – Henry Andrzejewski Sr., Harry Blakslee, Earl Boggan, Joe Brown, John Java, Ed Kubiak, Chuck Lyman, Edward Malanowicz, Vince McNamara, Jack Tanner, Bill Tuttle

1960's / 1980's – Donald Burns, John Burns, Vince Burns, Don Caccamise, Matt Colpoys, Edmund

Gicewicz, M.D., Richard Grapes, Al Huetter, Richard Leous, Bob Marafino, Connie McGillicuddy, Ron McKinney, John Nostrant, Don O'Brien, Phil Siezega, Matt Szydlowski Sr., George Voskerchian
1990's / present – Mike Binkowski, Ed Ceccatto, Jim Craig, Al D'Orazio, John Drobits, Al Fuller, Paul Gagliardi, Doug Hartmayer, Joel Java, Joe Jastrzemski, Len Kosobucki, Brian Madej, David Michael, Larry Michael, Dale Mussen, Matt Palma, Bob Schreck, Paul Trzybinski, Harris Wienke

In the spring of 2022 Girls Flag Football started in New York State and its tremendous growth has led it to become a Championship sport in New York State in 2024. WNYCFO is proud to have this sport available to Student-Athletes in Western New York and to have another season of the year to participate in the sport of football.

There have been many changes in the game of football since 1925, and we must wonder what the next 100 years are going to provide!



NOW.....
&.....THEN

Paul Trzybinski
Parliamentarian
WESTERN NEW YORK CERTIFIED FOOTBALL OFFICIALS, INC.