

## Sports -



Era photo by Joel Whetzel

Bill Howard (left), a member of the District 9 Committee, presents Rick Langianese with the District 9 50-Year Official's Service Award in honor of Langianese's late father, Frank, who served as a football referee in the district for decades. District 9 plans to honor all officials who have served at least 50 years in one sport.

## D9 honoring long-time referees

By JOEL WHETZEL  
jwhetzel@bradfordera.com

The District 9 Committee will be honoring long-time officials who have served at least 50 years in a sport.

The committee recently decided to create the 50-year Official's Service Award as a way to recognize referees who have served the local sports scene and PIAA for that length of time. Any official who has accumulated 50 years in a single sport is eligible.

"It's just so difficult to keep officials involved," said D9 Committee member and Oswayo Valley athletic director Bill Howard. "Officiating is such a thankless job, and the committee knows that. That's why we want to make sure we honor these long-time officials, because they're an integral part of high school sports. We can't have sports without them, and it's important they realize they're respected for the job they do."

Among the officials to first receive the award is Lewis Run native Frank Langianese, who is receiving the honor posthumously for his 61 years of service. Howard presented the award to Langianese's son, Rick, earlier this week in Bradford.

"I'm really honored to get this for my dad," Langianese said. "He enjoyed football officiating

because he was a football player and enjoyed being around the sport, and that's how he could be around it was by officiating."

In addition to his six decades of officiating, Frank Langianese worked a multitude of Big 30 Charities Classic matchups, something his son said he looked forward to each year.

"He loved doing the Big 30 Game every year," the younger Langianese said. "He had a bunch of footballs he got from the Big 30."

Langianese is one of five officials that has or will receive the honor in the near future. Those referees are all primarily football referees, and Langianese had the longest time of service among them.

According to Howard, this group is the first of what's hopefully many to come, as the D9 Committee would like to continuously honor those who serve the PIAA for such a lengthy amount of time.

"We're going to give this award out every year, and it will be awarded at a district championship in the sport (the recipient) was most active in," Howard noted.

Bestowing the award on a regular basis will require help, however. Howard says that while the D9 Committee has a list of potential recipients, it could use help finding more.



## REFEREES

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"The biggest challenge we have is identifying officials who maybe are alive, but are retired from officiating," Howard said.

For his part, Howard, who serves as the D9 basketball rules interpreter in addition to various officiating duties in a handful of sports, has traveled around to referee chapter meetings within D9's geographic footprint to help spread the word.

The referees he's met with have been receptive and helpful, according to

Howard. Now, though, the Committee wants as many submissions from the community as possible. Those who may know of a potential recipient are asked to contact any member of the D9 Committee to let them know.

"We're trying to spread the word and get it out, and hopefully people reach out to a member of the committee," Howard said. "We're asking people to reach out to us, and we can do the research and find out if we can find more (potential recipients). We want to honor as many as we possibly can."