

## CEP Magazine – June 2020 Meet Barry Mano: 'One breath of scandal freezes much honorable sweat'

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Barry Mano, Founder and President of the National Association of Sports Officials in Racine, Wisconsin, USA

Barry Mano ([bmano@referee.com](mailto:bmano@referee.com)) was interviewed by David D. Dodge ([david@sportsoc.com](mailto:david@sportsoc.com)), Founder and CEO of Sports Officiating Consulting LLC, based in Carlsbad, California, USA.

**DD:** Nearly four decades ago you founded the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) and have served as its president over that period of time. What led you to establish NASO?

**BM:** I founded *Referee* magazine in late 1975. Four years later, I began NASO. The association was formed as a 501(c)(3) educational association to provide benefits and services for sports officials. Nobody was paying much attention to the needs of the men, women, and young people who made organized sports possible. At its inception, NASO provided its members with an insurance protection program unheard of before that. To this day, NASO's liability and assault protection insurance program is renowned within the officiating industry. Over the past 40 years, NASO has built itself into what most call the "leading advocate on behalf of sports officials" on the planet. We are proud of carrying the mantle.

**DD:** Can you share the mission of the organization and how it has evolved through the years?

**BM:** NASO has evolved over its years to best serve its members and the industry it has helped create. That evolution has been required because of some major changes, including:

1. The professionalization of operations from local officials' associations all the way into the pro leagues. Sports officiating operations used to be an afterthought. Today they are forethoughts.
2. The proliferation of technology used to assist and evaluate officiating performance. This has enabled sports officials to be more effective and efficient. At the same time, technology has brought burden to officials. It has made the officiating product line fully public and with that has come unreasonable analysis and expectations—especially for officials at the high school and youth levels.
3. The demand for integrity in approach and function by sports officials. Today, sports officials are required—are mandated—to ascribe to and act to the highest ethical standards. There is no wiggle room here.

**DD:** NASO includes officials from across sports and from amateur to professional levels. Are the integrity risks the same or do they vary?

**BM:** The job of a sports official, any sports official, is this: to ensure that the game is played by the rules while emphasizing fairness and safety and doing so in a manner that enhances the stature of sports officiating. That is our definition, and we must abide by it. The integrity risks are fundamentally the same for anyone in sports officiating. But they become much more public at the higher levels of sport, the levels that have more broadcast interest. Integrity risks also get heightened when there are gambling interests involved. A primary example would be trying to bribe a sports official to sway the calls. Most officials get minimal compensation and thus have to exercise a commitment to integrity to resist the temptation to do something that violates the code stated above. We can be proud that, in the long history of sports officiating, there have been less than a handful of

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documented cases of officials violating the trust placed in them.

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