

Spotlight on Officials

Shanline Calls A Fair Game

By Gale Rose, Pratt Tribune

Pratt High School junior Zach Shanline is hitting the sidelines as a game official and having a good time doing it.

Guys involved with sports like being on the field and playing the game. Zach Shanline is no exception. He likes playing on the Pratt High School basketball and baseball teams. But he has found another way to participate in sports. Shanline is a game official.

Shanline started out officiating at age 14 when he was an umpire at t-ball games. At first, he did it because it was a way for a 14-year-old to make some money. But the longer he did it, the more he enjoyed it and now it has turned into something he does just for the sports he loves.

He officiates football, basketball, baseball and t-ball but his favorite is baseball.

Just like the athletes, being an official requires training. He recently passed a test required by Kansas State High School Activities Association to officiate. It's a 100 question test and has to be taken every year to officiate. Officials also have to attend two area meetings as part of their training requirements.

Shanline is getting registered in baseball, basketball and football. Each sport requires him to take the test and attend KSHSAA meetings. Of his three sports, Shanline is most knowledgeable about baseball.

Shanline is currently certified to officiate up to high school games but he doesn't want to officiate at that level at this time. He doesn't want to put himself under that kind of pressure just yet. When he gets to college, he would like to officiate college games.

The youngest age he works with is 10. When he is working those games, he has to decide if he should just officiate or if he should also teach. He looks to the other officials when it's appropriate to do some teaching on the field.

Officiating has unique challenges for Shanline. Interpreting all the rules in football can be difficult. In basketball, the quickness and timing of the game require a lot of skill.

"It's a constant learning process because you never know what you'll see on the field," Shanline said.

He also has to make decisions with fans and coaches just feet away from him.

Part of the officiating process is sideline management of teams, coaches and fans. Officials have to remain in control even when people don't agree with the call.

"Our main goal is to be professional out there and call a fair game," Shanline said.

Parents and coaches can make the job hard for officials. That's what makes it interesting. There's rarely a game that goes by that Shanline doesn't get yelled at.

With hundreds of eyes watching what the officials are watching, if there's even a little bit of difference, you'll hear about it, Shanline said.

But it's the people he meets and getting to work with kids that are his favorite part of officiating. He is very impressed with the officials he works with.



"The officials in this area are outstanding," Shanline said.

He has learned a great deal from the seasoned officials he works with and said he wouldn't be where he is today without the officials that have taught him all the little things about his job.

When he is on the field, Shanline said he has to be confident in what he sees and show that confidence and be professional. Confidence is a major part of what he does.

Looking to the future, Shanline said he didn't want to make officiating a career. He just wants to have it as a hobby for a long, long time. But, if the right doors open at the right time, he might change his mind. You just never know, Shanline said.

Officiating is a special activity for Shanline and he enjoys being involved in the game.

"I love it. I'm blessed to do what I do," Shanline said.

Shanline is active in many areas at school and that schedule limits his opportunities to officiate. But during the summer he is very busy. He has a full time job but still manages to work 90 games in the summer. His days are full. He's at his job from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. then is at games from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

"I love the go, go, go. I love the work and I love the busy schedule," Shanline said.

When Shanline attends a game as a fan, he finds himself spending more time watching the officials than the game itself. The same thing happens when he watches sports on TV.

When watching a game, he will sometimes see a call that an official got wrong. But, he said he never says anything to that official about the missed call.

Besides officiating, Shanline keeps busy at PHS playing basketball and baseball, is junior class president and involved with National Honor Society (vice president), Pep Club, Ambassadors, mentorship program and a first time participant in musicals doing work backstage. He also does community service projects.

Shanline is the son of Pam and Chris Shanline.