

Referee Barry Wright reflects on his induction to IBCA Hall of Fame

by John Hough, Sports Writer
January 2 2018 8:51 AM







GREENFIELD - After 38 years, local referee, Barry Wright has been inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. The ceremony is scheduled to take place on May 5 at Redbird Arena on the campus of Illinois State University in Normal.

Was Wright expecting this honor? No sir.

“It’s just like when I got my first sectional in girls basketball when you least expect it you get it. I suppose that’s how it works,” Wright joking said.

That sectional was in 1997 at Pittsfield when the Saukees beat Carrollton.

The news broke recently when Wright was slated to officiate the third-place game between Calhoun and Western in the Spartan Classic. There was supposed to be a surprise recognition during the game as IBCA Hall of Famer and long-time Carrollton boys basketball head coach Jeff Krumwiede planned to surprise him by telling Wright about the information during the game. However, the news was broke to Wright beforehand.

“The message was supposed to wait because Jeff was going to surprise and call me out at halftime of the third-place game,” Wright said. “Dave Kane from the State Journal-Register texted and congratulated me, and then a few minutes later Chad Baalman congratulated me after seeing it on Twitter.”

As for being inducted, Wright is thankful and feels that all of his hard work on and off the court or field has paid off.

“It’s really nice. It makes all the long trips through the snow drifts, ice storms, sleet, and everything else. I remember one night in Quincy I did a girls game, and it didn’t snow, but by the time I got done, it had snowed six inches. That was at ten o’clock, and I didn’t get home until two in the morning.”

Wright, a Greenfield alum and Manchester resident, is a jack of all trades official. He referees football, basketball, baseball, and softball. A big reason why he’s been in the officiating business for almost four decades is that he loves high school sports and finds it all “very enjoyable” consistently being around athletes, coaches, and fans. Even though they're difficulties of being a referee and it's quite often a thankless job.

“I’ve met a lot of nice people throughout 38 years. Fellow officials and athletic directors who take good care of you,” Wright said. “I know the coaches jobs are tough, but they know our job is tough too. They know when to cool it and when not to cool it,” Wright said. “I know our game with Brown County and North Greene (Dec. 8) was a tough, good, hard-fought championship game. They’re clawing, scraping, and doing everything they can for their kids and I understand all of that. Once it was over with it was over with, the coaches were very good about it.”

The most significant games he’s worked was three girls State Championship Basketball Tournaments in 2006, 2007, and 2009.

Of all the games in every sport he's officiated/refereed, the most memorable one Wright has been apart of was the unforgettable 19-inning softball thriller between Carrollton and Pleasant Plains in the 1998 Class A Beardstown Sectional Championship where the Hawks prevailed 2-1.

"Both teams scored one run in the first and didn't score again until the 19th inning. Liz DeShasier pitched all 19 innings. Even though it was a 1-1 ballgame, it was not boring because if they get a runner on then you have to be moving around and be on top of things at the very best. You have to be on top of your game and on your toes in a game like that."

Wright was an excellent runner at Greenfield High School, then later Eastern Illinois University. He broke the 50-second mark in the 440-yard dash back in high school and was consistently at the top of meets in the 880 and 440 and was a leader of the Tigers' track team.

Moving forward, Wright now has proof that he is officially a highly recommended official, but knowing passionate high school supporters, that probably won't change a thing.

"I get a lot of wonderful comments," Wright said with a laugh. "You still stink! Open up the good eye and close the bad one, dummy!"

That "dummy" is now a hall of fame high school basketball official.