



**Arizona Interscholastic Association**  
7007 N. 18<sup>th</sup> St; Phoenix, AZ 85020  
602-385-3810; fax: 602-385-3779

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**NATIONAL EVENT TO ASSIST ARIZONA OFFICIALS IN IMPROVING SKILLS**

PHOENIX, AZ (June 5, 2009) – Arizona’s high school athletes already are preparing for the 2009-10 school year by playing in summer leagues and working out on a daily basis.

But what about the men and women who officiate the estimated 48,000 games and matches throughout the year?

They aren’t about to hang their uniforms in the closet and allow them to gather dust while propping their feet up and watching a big-screen TV.

They are busy with annual clinics and seminars, and from July 25-28 have even more of an opportunity to refine their craft by attending the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Sports Officiating Summit at the J.W. Marriott Starr Pass Resort in Tucson, presented by the National Association of Sports Officials.

The event, held in Arizona for the first time, is held in cooperation with the National Federation of State High School Associations and the Arizona Interscholastic Association.

The theme of this year’s event is “Judgment and Decision Making – How Officiating Leaders Make Great Calls.”

“We’ve taken 18 months in planning this event, and we believe it will benefit our officials throughout Arizona as well as those across the country,” said Gary Whelchel, the AIA’s Commissioner of Officials.

On July 25, the day before the summit officially begins, Arizona officials will have a special day to themselves, featuring speakers from around the country, including four-time Super Bowl referee Jerry Markbreit.

Whelchel estimates that 1,000 of the state’s officials in seven sports – roughly 40 percent of the officiating population – will attend. Those who cannot attend should expect to receive a full report from those who do, Whelchel said.

There also will be a Women in Officiating symposium. Whelchel expects about 100 attendees.

The annual state football kickoff meeting will be held at the site, and will have at least 520 of the state’s 700 football officials, Whelchel said. Registration is open through the first week of July.

“We want to get the whole state on the same page, philosophical- and application-wise. Arizona is so big and spread out, but we want officials in Page doing things the same way officials in Tucson would,” Whelchel said.

Some of the new football officials will attend after a new-officials meeting on July 7. Football officials, usually in crews, start at the Pop Warner/flag football levels where they can enhance their skills before climbing to the high-school level.

One hundred of Arizona's top officials leaders will be remaining to attend the three days of national meetings and then report to their colleagues.

Arizona continues to be at the forefront in the area of sportsmanship through its Pursuing Victory With Honor program and has enlisted its officials to play a significant role. Whelchel, AIA Executive Director Dr. Harold Slemmer and AIA Assistant Director Chuck Schmidt will be featured speakers at the national event on July 28.

"Sportsmanship, or the lack of it, is the main reason why some officials don't come back, and in Arizona, we are fortunate that we don't have a lot of stuff (disagreements)," Whelchel said. "You obviously aren't going to please everybody, but our officials do a good job. We emphasize sportsmanship, and you can't have that without the involvement of officials."

July also signals the beginning of the task of assigning officials to games, freshman through varsity. Most of it is done by computer.

Officials and their rates of payment per game: football \$55, basketball \$50, baseball \$48, soccer \$45, volleyball and softball \$40. Freshman and JV sports are \$35.

"In many states, there are a lot of colleges in addition to the high schools as far as attracting officials are concerned," Whelchel said. "In Arizona, high school is it with a few exceptions and we continue to take pride in developing the best officials possible."

Additional information and officials forms are available at [aiaonline.org](http://aiaonline.org). Or contact the AIA office, (602) 385-3810.

#### **Have a Story Idea:**

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at [dketchum@aiaonline.org](mailto:dketchum@aiaonline.org).