

...On the Wrestling Official

By William Welker

Over the years, I have written poem verses for wrestlers, coaches, and even wrestling parents. So today, I want to praise the man who often takes a beating during competition -- the Wrestling Official.

Unfortunately, those who have never worn a black-and-white striped shirt haven't the faintest idea how difficult it is to be an official. Furthermore, a few would rather blame the referee than learn the rules. Frankly, if it weren't for the kids, many of us would have stopped officiating years ago.

I, personally, don't mind being yelled at for making a tough call; that comes with the job. What I do take offense to is when someone questions my honesty. You can always question my judgment. Heck, even I have felt remorse and have anguished over a questionable call. But don't say I "cheated" a wrestler. That implies that I "blew" a call on purpose.

As a 22-year veteran wrestling official, coaches have often evinced their displeasure over a decision I made, sometimes vehemently. I have accepted their "comments of frustrations" under stressful circumstances. However, on rare occasions when a mat mentor attacked my integrity, he spent the rest of the meet in the locker room.

Yes, being an official in any sport can be very trying at times. You must be willing to accept the good, the bad and, on occasion, the ugly.

Thus, the following lyrical salute was written for all wrestling referees. Without such men, the show would not go on.

THE WRESTLING OFFICIAL

He's the man on the mat who strives to be fair,
For the sake of the wrestlers, he truly does care,
Learning rule after rule, he prepares for each meet,
Always keeping in shape so he's quick on his feet.

In the midst of the action, he's consistent and kind,
He protects all the wrestlers, they're first on his mind,
When faced with swift judgment, he's on top of his game,
He's a man of integrity, never looking for fame.

Many spectators jeer him when put to the test,
Though some fans are fickle, he knows what is best,
He ignores all their taunting, when making a call,
It's a tough avocation, but he always stands tall.

The man in the middle deserves to be mentioned,
He takes on the challenge with noble intentions,
For the love of the sport, he dons a shrill whistle,
Yes, it's time that we honor the *Wrestling Official*. 🏆

2002 Bearcat Open - Binghamton, New York, 165 pound final. Noel Thompson, Hofstra, decisioned Paul Siemon, unattached, 3-2. Photo by Sonja Stanbro.

