

Ned Franks
Game Official

Many youngsters who play sports in middle and high school have dreams of taking their talents to college and possibly the pros. Very few have thoughts of becoming a game official... except one of tonight's inductees, Ned Franks.

Ned grew up in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and loved sports. In high school, Ned played football, basketball and baseball. However, his path in sports took him a different way — into game officiating. At the age of 16, Ned umpired Little League Baseball in Clarksdale, starting what would become his “calling” for more than 40 years. Ned next branched into officiating junior high and junior varsity football while he was still in college at Delta State.

In 1977, Ned moved to Memphis, where he became a fixture on the city's courts and fields for the next four decades. He started his time around the city playing adult softball and soccer, but he quickly turned to officiating again.

He became a TSSAA basketball official in 1980, and later that decade, Ned added softball and baseball umpire to his résumé. He umpired softball until 2021 and baseball until 2005. Ned moved to the college ranks at the start of the 2000, calling games around the region for the SEC, Gulf South Conference and Tennessee and Mississippi community colleges.

While serving as an umpire for high school and college, he also found time to call games for the Memphis Park Commission, Bartlett Parks & Recreation and the Millington Navy Base. He umpired softball games for men's fast-pitch and slow-pitch, women's slow-pitch and adult co-ed slow-pitch. He also called games for the area's men's and youth basketball leagues.

Ned also served as the athletics director at Holy Rosary Catholic for 12 years and St. Paul Catholic School for another 12 years. For more than 20 years, Ned helped train the next generation of officials and umpires in the Parochial Athletic Association. He also officiated basketball, baseball and softball games, and he assigned officials for league games for 30 years.

The number of courts and fields Ned has been on, however, is not the most impressive feat of his career. His service as an official is a testament to how coaches and fellow officials see him — professional, dependable, of integrity, a man of character, approachable, and respectful. Moreover, Ned was so well respected that coaches and teams requested him to officiate their games, and that says it all.

Please welcome to the Hall of Fame, as a game official — Ned Franks.