

Ministers of the Game

By Leah Berard

For three longtime officials across various sports, their commitment to spreading the message of Jesus Christ comes first. Using their officiating platforms, Nate Harris, Kris Loving and Mike Gammons lead ministries to encourage and support other officials.

Monday Night Devotional

Seeking to offer a place of hope during the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, Harris, a Division I basketball referee, and his wife,



Nate and Jessica Harris, founders of MND, continue to guide officials toward faith, community and purpose beyond the field.

Jessica, started Monday Night Devotional (MND) in 2020. For officials accustomed to being on the go, the shutdown of sports was an abrupt and challenging change. The group began with the Harrises and a few others organizing a prayer call to lift up the nation, officials and their communities.

"The need for connection and encouragement was so strong that we just kept meeting, and we haven't stopped since," Harris said. "What began as a moment of prayer during a global shutdown has grown into an ongoing ministry of community, faith and hope."

MND is non-denominational and designed for sports officials and their spouses. Its mission is to help officials find peace and purpose amid the pressures of the profession.

"It's about staying grounded in Jesus when the lights are bright and the crowd is loud," Harris said.

For more information, visit mndministries.org.

FCA Officials Ministry

For Loving, a Big Ten football official, his ministry journey began in 2024 when he became a minister for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), uniting his passion for officiating football and basketball with his calling to share the Gospel.

His call to lead became clear after a dream in which God showed him that officiating would become his ministry.

"I have been called to be a light, a witness and an ambassador for Christ," Loving said. "He has given me the wonderful assignment to share His Gospel and minister throughout my officiating journey."

Loving offers conference-wide and remote groups where officials can connect for prayer and Bible study. He also envisions chaplain programs for tournaments, similar to the spiritual support available to players and coaches. For more information, visit indyfca.org/officials.

Fellowship of Christian Officials

Gammons, an experienced football referee, also had a dream in which God revealed the need for an organization dedicated to ministering to and supporting sports officials. From that dream, the Fellowship of Christian Officials (FCO) was born and now serves over 800 officials nationwide.

FCO's mission has three parts: affirming faith, supporting officials and encouraging them to share the Good News.

"Sports officiating has been an essential part of my life, and God has blessed me in countless ways through officiating," Gammons said. "FCO has allowed me to give back and support my fellow officials in Christ."

For more information or to join, go to fellowshipofchristianofficials.org.

Leah Berard, Bisbee, Ariz., officiated international rugby and now officiates college football. □

Honoring Bob Morris' Legacy

In November, the Roseville, Calif., softball community came together to celebrate the life of longtime umpire Bob Morris, whose love for the game and its players left a lasting mark on the community. He umpired softball, while also officiating basketball and flag football across the Sacramento area.

Local coach Richard Peeters organized the first memorial tournament in Morris' name as both a tribute and a fundraiser, with proceeds supporting efforts to establish permanent memorials in Morris' honor. Plans include dedicated benches, signage and potential field naming through the city's community gifts program. For Peeters, the event was about more than softball.

"Everybody wants to be here for a bigger cause than a softball game," he said. "This tournament is to show the city and community just how important he was. Bob's the kind of guy who will live forever in this community."

SOURCE: KXTV-TV

New Voices Behind the Plate

In an effort to address its shortage of officials, the Ohio Valley Board of Approved Umpires welcomed seven high school girls into its training program last season. All are working youth-level softball games after completing rulebook sessions, on-field shadowing and full assessments.

"It has been a pleasure ... getting to know these extraordinary young ladies and their parents," said board president Randy Whitlatch. The program offers free training and a clear path: attend meetings, gain experience, and, within a few years, move into high school assignments. Whether former players or still in school, the group says age and background don't matter; only dedication.

SOURCE: TIMES LEADER

Have you heard an inspirational or motivational officiating story?

Send your ideas to
GettingItRight@referee.com

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