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Prep Sports

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Longtime referee Blake Wood remembered by peers

by [Tom Aluise](#)
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CHARLESTON, W.Va -- Most area football officials can tell you what teams were playing the first time they blew their whistle in a varsity game.

And there's a good chance they were working that game because of Blake Wood.

"He got a lot of officials started," said Roger McVicker, a veteran member of the Kanawha Valley Football Officials Association. "We couldn't get any games around here 30 years ago."

Wood had connections in Kentucky and secured high school games in the Bluegrass State for fledgling football officials from the Kanawha Valley.

"His wife was from Belfry (Ky.) and he knew some of the coaches down there," said McVicker, who's worked 36 years as an official. "He got tons of people started in football and basketball."

Wood, an Elkview resident, died on Wednesday following a battle with cancer. He was 70.

Fred McPherson, a 27-year veteran football official, thinks of Wood every time he drives through Roane County.

McPherson's first game on the varsity level was Buffalo at Walton. It was Wood who got McPherson the assignment.

"Blake got games when nobody else got games," McPherson said. "He was well-liked by those coaches in the out-lying areas."

"Blake was a fella who was always interested in helping other officials," said Ken Legg, who officiated football in the Valley for 58 years. "He could get more games than any other official I worked with."

Wood worked all levels of football throughout the region, from middle school through junior varsity and varsity on the high school level.

He also officiated basketball and track and worked as an umpire in baseball and softball.

Wood's tenure in football spanned 40 years.

"Blake was honest," McPherson said. "Blake was dedicated. He was committed. Regardless of the weather, if there was a game, Blake would be there. He might not always be on time, but he'd be there."

"Blake was friendly," McPherson added. "He had a good rapport with the coaches."

He also got along well with his fellow officials, Legg said.

"He was well-liked not only by the school officials but by the fellas he worked with," Legg said.

Legg recalled that Wood often would ask a member of his football officiating crew to lead the group in prayer before the start of a game.

"He was conscious of the value of that type of thing, and he set the tone for the way we conducted ourselves," Legg said. "I appreciated that."

He also set an example on how to live one's life, Legg said.

"He was as clean as a hound's tooth," Legg said. "He never smoked and he never fooled with alcohol. He was never profane. Those kinds of things are contagious. Other people see that and like to pattern themselves that way. So, he set a good example."

"He was a buddy. I'm certainly going to miss Blake, not only in officiating but personally too."

Because of his illness, Wood didn't work games this past football season.

"But he was at a lot of games. He was out and about. He still loved the game," said McPherson, who noted that the Kanawha Valley Football Officials Association has created the Blake Wood Award, to be presented annually to the association's top rookie official.

Wood was retired from F.H. Wood and Sons Trucking and Charleston Newspapers.

He is survived by his wife, Judith, and three children.

Services for Wood are scheduled for 11 a.m. Saturday at the Hafer Funeral Home Chapel in Elkview. Friends may call from 6 to 8 p.m. today at the funeral home.

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Blake is going to be greatly missed. He helped a lot of officials when others would not. Blake was always the same person when ever you seen him. He will be missed.

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