

Bryan: Welcome to the inaugural podcast of the EMAIFO INSIGHT. My name is Bryan Andrade and I will be serving as your host. Today we will discuss this year's Aleppo Shriners, Massachusetts High School Football All-Star Classic, played on June 17 at Bentley University. Future EMAIFO Insight Podcasts will deal with similar EMAIFO involved events, as well as NFHS rules, interpretations and mechanics. All done in the spirit of making each of us more informed and better officials. Joining us today are three of our own Mark Getchell, the Shriners Game officials coordinator and assigner. Angelo Scaccia, the referee in the game played on June 17, as well as Rich Newman, a side judge in the game. The game itself turned into a thriller ending in dramatic fashion. The North Squad led ten to nothing heading into the locker room at halftime. The South team stormed back in the second half to win 20 - 17. This was after the South Squad scored a touchdown on a third down pass play inside the ten yard line with 6 minutes remaining and then holding the North team off, forcing a 45 yard field goal attempt with 40 seconds left in the game. That was unsuccessful. Mark, as the official's coordinator, let's start with you, please.

Mark: Okay.

Bryan: Mark has 30 going to 40 years of football officiating experience at the high school and collegiate levels. Playoffs and Super Bowls included in his officiating resume. Beyond Mark's burgeoning plumbing business and raising their family, Mark and his wife have been our connection to Whitman Hanson Regional High School. For our weekly meetings for a great number of years. Mark has been assigning officials to the annual Shriners game for many years. Mark and his wife are also strong supporters of the Shriners in their deeds and actions. Going beyond his assigning duties, the EMAIFO is extremely thankful for all their efforts. Mark, can you talk to us about your Shriners involvement? How did you come to be involved and the things that you and your wife do for them?

Mark: Well, we started about 30 years ago with my wife and Martha from, Whitman Hanson, and they worked together and she took care of the cheerleaders. And Several years later, the assigning commissioner had resigned and Kathy asked me if I'd like to take it over. I was thrilled to get it because I had been on a few of the games and been in the game myself and it was very exciting and it's been 17 years since we've been there and I've had the opportunity to use all different types of officials from all different groups Cape Cod, South Shore, Boston, the Mansfield Board. And we've always had an opportunity to put in veteran officials that are retiring father and

son teams. We've had a whole family one game. We have five gentlemen from one family, which was excellent. And this year we're going to have our first woman official, which should be very exciting. I know she's an outstanding official. That's about it. The game itself takes a lot of work. We start in January, the first meeting. Now we do the Zoom meetings before we used to drive up to the Shriners every meeting, which is kind of tough, through the traffic in the evenings. But we are with technology with the zoom and it helps quite a bit and we get a lot more done.

Bryan: What do you need to tell these people that you select for the Games upon being selected about their responsibilities in attendance at the Shriners events leading up to the Games?

Mark: Well, we assign the people, I call them. We like to have them at a scrimmage, the banquet, and we have an orientation which we usually we pass out some swag or some goodies we give for the officials and the orientation is the main thing. That's really when the Shriners talk about the hospital, the players responsibility and the fundraising, the endeavor they take to get the game rolling.

Bryan: Do the officials and players meet together at any point in time during the course of the time leading up to the game itself?

Mark: Just the orientation we meet, everybody meets, we meet the coaches, we introduce everybody to the crowds and the parents. And it is very nice to see the officials get a standing ovation once in their careers.

Bryan: About once the game starts. Mark, what kind of responsibilities do you take on while the games being played, if any?

Mark: Well, mainly I just take care of, you know, a few issues with the coaches, with the officials, the coaches. They got questions. They take care of that and make sure my officials get there on time. Usually we get them fed before the game and we have a chance to try to get there 2 hours ahead of time so we can eat, talk and, you know, get together, figure out a game plan for the game. Those who are, you know, give the referee a good hour to sit down with his new officials because some of them might be from mixed associations. You know, get your pre-game in and we try to use seven officials. So there's a few things we normally don't do in high school that you would apply to a college game. I have my grandsons do the balls, they also have two volunteers, other officials where I use their nephews every year they come in, they take care of the balls for us, the waterboys, whatever jobs we can get them in, give them a chance to see the game and get

close to it. And usually they, all my grandsons have done it and they're right into high school football now. They love it. You know, they get them started.

Bryan: If we could just step aside from you, Mark, for a moment and maybe bring you back later. I can't thank you enough for the answers to the questions that I brought to you in the first part of the segment here tonight. And move on to you, Rich, if you wouldn't mind.

Rich: That's fine and I'm ready.

Bryan: Rich Newman began his football officiating career in 1991, having lived in New Jersey and New York. Rich began officiating football after having moved to Massachusetts. He started officiating high school football in 1991, and his collegiate football career began in 1999. In between a career with investment bank firms and raising his family, Rich has carved out an officiating career that has seen him assigned to NCAA and ECAC playoff games, as well as multiple high school playoff games and Super Bowls. In Rich's own words, I savored each one. He showed me the kind of commitment he has to his game and to our group by graciously giving his time on the phone so that I would be able to properly introduce him to you tonight with his two year old granddaughter and five year old grandson vying for his attention while they were vacationing in Maine. I thank you that night and I'll thank you again here, Rich to the caliber of the players. Their execution to be representative of their status as the best high school seniors from the 2021 season with the game being played in mid-June 2022. Can you cite a play or two from the game?

Rich: Sure, Bryan. Thanks, and thanks for those kind words. And before I talk about a play that I remember quite vividly, I'd like also to thank Mark, for allowing me to participate in the game, helped him out a few times on the chains or in the field. And I really appreciate it. And I don't think Mark and Kathy do not get enough credit for the time they put in. But anyway, the play I recall quite vividly, Bryan, was as you mentioned earlier, I was the side judge. There was an out pattern about a 20 yard pattern down the field by the receiver and the quarterback laid the ball in perfectly. Right, right on the sideline. The receiver caught the ball right on the sideline. And it just looked like a, you know, a collegiate play. Both those players seemed like they're ready for the next level. And That's the one play I really wanted to talk about. Brian That was a great throw and a great catch. It looked very natural for those two.

Bryan: So you felt very strongly that even though it was June of 2022, that the players that were selected, the high school seniors for the 2021 season deserve to be there and their execution levels were at a higher level, ready for the next level of football.

Rich: Absolutely great athletes. And, you know, they hadn't you know, they had a week or two of practice. I know, getting ready for the game. You know, they hadn't been playing for several months like they do in September, October and November, but they were very definite about what they were doing, you know, and there are a lot of other great players out there too. I just remember that one play.

Bryan: So I appreciate your memory. Rich with the game being played in mid-June marking the start of the coming season. Was your preparation any different than, say, a game scheduled on October 14?

Rich: Well, you know, it's a year round thing for the officials. A lot of them do study sessions throughout the year. Certainly in the spring we start to get together in groups and go over tests and rules and things like that have discussions. So even though it was the middle of June, you know, we had it in the rule book several times over the prior few weeks. So it's not not a lot different. You can't just turn this on and off for three months a year, turn it off for nine months. It's really a year round avocation for us. So I think we were all pretty up on the rules in the middle of June.

Bryan: I'm sure that you were. What was your favorite or best part of the whole Shriners all star experience, Rich.

Rich: It's a great experience from the beginning to the end. You know, just getting asked by Mark to be in the game, the introduction, the orientation that Mark mentioned earlier, pre-game is there a little earlier than usual, and we're fed there, which is nice. Angelo had a great pre-game for this particular evening. The Halftime ceremony is moving. They usually have a child who was maybe an adult by this point in time, but he was a former patient. And there are instances in the past where actually one of the patients played in the game. So that very moving ceremony at halftime. I enjoy the end of the game. The coaches, both coaching staffs whom the officials have the opportunity to get together and have some refreshments. Bryan As an official, I think what I liked most was the competition, the game itself. I love being out there with the high caliber of players, a high caliber of officials. It's always a good crowd there. So if I had to answer one part of the game, one part of the day, the experience that I enjoyed the most, it would be the actual game just because that's what we as officials like to do.

Bryan: I might have led you into this question, and you may have answered to some degree, but what would your advice be, Rich, to someone that was selected to work the Shriners game of the future?

Rich: Well, embrace it. Embrace it. It's an honor to be selected. It's an honor to work the game. And just to understand more about the Shriners Hospital, and I think Angelo is going to talk a little bit about it later on on this podcast. But it's an honor to be out there under the circumstances that we have the opportunity to be there.

Bryan: Thank you for your insight, Rich. Last but definitely not least, we have the games referee Angelo Scaccia. Angelo comes to us today similar to Mark with 30 going to 40 years of football officiating experience. He is also recognized as the State House representative, having retired in 2020 after serving 23 terms in office. He continues his work as an attorney during his tenure as a House representative. He chaired many committees and proposed many bills in the Commonwealth that were ratified. Angelo also served as a member of Speaker Dimasi's Leadership Team and was the Dean of the House presiding over the House at the start of each two year term. You will recognize Angelo as a master of ceremonies at the EMAIFO banquet each year where he does stellar work. Angelo was such a storied resumé. Along with your accomplishments as a football official, which include collegiate playoffs and bowls, as well as high school playoffs and Super Bowl assignments. What was the Shriner's game assignment like? How did it compare to other high profile assignments? How did you perceive the overall experience? What stood out for you?

Angelo: First of all, Bryan, it was a tremendous honor and privilege to be part of that night. Had some added significance for me because the individual who was supposed to referee the game had hurt his back. So it became a quandary for Mark to figure out who was going to be the referee that night. And after various coin flips that I lost, I became the referee, only joking. Again, there was no equivalent that I can think of from the shriners, his game to other games. I did the semifinal of college football game way back when, and that was a great honor too. But just football itself faded. When you think about the significance of the Shriners football game, the meaning behind it, and these for athletes, each one was an all star in his or her own right. They brought their best game. And like you said in the beginning, the school was 17 to 14. And when I blew the whistle to start the game and I was in the end zone and a young man who received the kick went 99 yards on the first play for a touchdown, you ain't gonna beat that too often Bryan and the game continued in that vein

throughout, the sportsmanship that these kids had was phenomenal. The athleticism that they had was incomparable. Again, they were the best of the best and they brought the game to the forefront that night. You asked Rich what play he thought was the best and the play that I can talk about, everyone thought and everyone saw it was played at the quarterback and you know, as a referee Andrade, I mean Bryan how you have to position yourself and your main responsibility as the referee. Well, this young man looked down to the left. He looked down to the right, he looked down to the left again. He couldn't find anyone. So he started to run around the end. And as a productive referee, I followed him to make sure that nothing would happen to him. And he turned on a dime with his hand touching the ground, spun back and came right back at me. And unfortunately, Bryan, I had nowhere to go because he was being chased by five, 250 pound lineman, three of which took me to the turf, two of which took the quarterback to the turf. As these three young men stood over me, they said, Are you all right, ref ? And I said, I will be if you pick me up. And they proceeded to dust me off. They had to take the quarterback out of the game, and we proceeded thereon with the game. It was an absolute delightful game. I felt bad for the kid who missed it. I'm not so sure of the officials would have concurred because after 3 hours and 15 minutes, I think they were ready to go at that point. But a fantastic game, fantastic individuals. And it couldn't have gone better. I didn't see an official miss a call, and that's good for them. The coaches were magnanimous. The players were, as they said, tremendous to each other. The sportsmanship was the best I have ever seen. And I would think most of those kids this year are starting at least in a freshman capacity, as to the college that they're going to. So how do they define it? I can't equate it to anything else I have ever done because of the meaning of the game plus the game itself. So that's where I am on that, Bryan.

Bryan: As the referee, Angelo. Were there any additional responsibilities that were asked of you in preparation for the game that you needed to execute? Or did you just feel like there were things that you needed to do with the responsibilities of the game ahead of you?

Angelo: Well, you know, you've been a referee. I think most of us have been referees. We know what we have to do. We do the pre-game. We go through an hour and a half of the pre-game. Things should pop out. And they did. But what they had done already, Bryan, was they flipped the coin some time before. I don't know if was the night before or what, at the banquet excuse me, but I wanted to do my own flip, even though the flip was, original and it was valid. I saw these

Shriners in the middle of the field and I wanted to honor them publicly. And I talked to them as to what they had done for this evening's festivities and what they have done for years and years and years, helping out young individuals. I asked the young lady to flip the coin and she put her hand on the victor. And then she was so pleased, all of those Shriners that were in the middle of the field, I think we're very honored and happy that we did it that way. And so was that an extra thing? Maybe not, but it gave me a chance to make a speech, and it gave me a chance to thank these people publicly for what they were doing that evening.

Bryan: That leads me to the next question I had Angelo. Can you talk to us about the Shriners community and the reception you received from them after being selected to work the game?

Angelo: Like I said in the beginning, it, first of all, was an honor and a privilege. I was so impressed with the compelling personal stories and what they do and how they do it for a variety of people. And the Shriners provide the highest quality care to children with neuromuscular conditions, burn injuries, and other special health care needs within a compassionate, family centered and collaborative care environment. They and I found out that night that they provide for the education of physicians and other healthcare professionals. They pay for that Bryan, and they conduct research and discover new knowledge that improves the quality of care and quality of life of children and families. And this mission is carried out without regard to race, color. Alas, they have come up with what they call the children's transportation funds. And these funds are used to transport poor children in their families free of charge to the Shriner's Hospital. And how do they do it? You know, when you're drinking a Coke and it's a pull tab on the top of it, which we ignore, but push it back because we want to drink that delicious coke. Those pull tabs. Are used to create that 300,000 fund. I don't know how we get this out, Bryan, but if we could save those tabs, if we could send them to the Shriners, we could be helping people, sometimes by plane rides to get people immediately to the Shriners. These specialized vans and volunteers give countless hours and driving them to and fro doctors offices. All of these flights are paid for by this fund. No one sees a single bill, what these folks do. I just found it awesome. And on a personal note. A month later, my daughter called me. And says, Dad, your grandchild had to go to the hospital tonight. And I said, Oh, honey, what's wrong? He was at a party. And you know how those kids with those marshmallows, one caught on fire and the kid turned quickly and it went into my grandson's eye. And she took them to the hospital. And the hospital

said, Take him to the Shriners. And she took them to the Shriners. They had ophthalmologists on the scene. And he is doing well today. And I thank the Shriners for what they had done for me, not only the football game now, but for my family so that I can never forget the game. Can I ever forget the shriners? The answer is no. They are the best.

Bryan:Angelo, thank you for your kind, heartfelt, informative insight into the Shriners work and the quality of the game played by the student athletes who were there that night. Last topic for today. I'd like each of you to weigh in on for a moment or two. And it's a simple reflection on what was the post game activities were like and what was provided for you post-game. I know Rich touched on some of this earlier, but I'm looking to speak to the camaraderie, the effort, the outpouring from many different areas. And if each of you could talk a little bit about post-game activities, we'd be very thankful.

Rich:Yea, thanks Bryan this is Rich. Yeah. As mentioned earlier post-game we were had the opportunity to get together with the coaching staffs in both squads and the officials and just went over these went over the game and certainly they went over some of the activities, you know pre-game because the coaches are involved for weeks at a time and they gave of their time for the for the practices and the scrimmages and things, which some of us officials actually help out of the scrimmages as well. But it's really unlike any other game. You're not going to get to go with both coaching staff probably. So this game is definitely different. And at the end of the day, everyone is there for the same reason. And that's for the Shriners hospital and for the kids that they are, you know that the Shriners help.

Speaker 1:Angelo. Mark, anything to add to that?

Mark:But with the postgame what we do is we clean up any extra food we give to the players, which they appreciate. But you do get the opportunity to sit down and have a drink with the fellow coaching staff. I remember there's probably 12 coaches that you're going to meet there from, hopefully from your area where you work, where you can make some new associations. That's great for politicking and meeting everybody, getting a face with the name and become friendly over the years. They've been doing it for over 30 years. So the guys are just fabulous, you're there for an hour or so. Everybody's tired, but they all want to talk football. Yes, it's just a great day.

Angelo: I just would reiterate the same, Bryan, again, when you get both coaches, both teams all together, all having a pop at the end of the game, having a good chow, and in talking about the game and young kids, stars who were going on to college. The meaning it had for them was inspiring. So. And Mark's right. I mean, those same coaches you see during the course of the year and it's not bad. A night that you'll never forget. A night that you will always remember.

Bryan: Thank you, Mark, Angelo and Rich, for spending time with us and for being willing to discuss and share your experiences about the 2022 Aleppo Shriners, Massachusetts Football All Star Classic and thank you the listener for tuning in. Our second episode of EMAIFO Insight will be available soon. We will turn our programming toward rules, interpretations and game mechanics, Discussion in coming episodes. Podcast updates will be sent out via email or through our website emaifo.net as we make more episodes available. Also, strongly consider giving some type of support to Aleppo's Shriners for all they do for families in need and for allowing us to be part of their effort. This has been EMAIFO Insight. Thank you for making us part of your day.