

A Tale of Three Referees



Do you know the answer to the following trivia question? There are three referees from Maryland who have been inducted in the National Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Association Hall of Fame, the Maryland Soccer Hall of Fame and recognized for the Ray “Granny” Kraft Referee Service Award (actually, only two won the Service Award, the third created it). The answer is Raymond Granville Kraft, Paul Tamborino (they are in the photo on the left) and Joe Manfre (the photo on the right standing to the right of the Mr. Kraft).

Ray “Granny” Kraft set the stage for the other two. A good sandlot player during the thirties and forties who coached as well. Under his auspices, the Pompeii Soccer Club lost the 1958 final in the US Open Cup against the Los Angeles Kickers at Kirk Field in Baltimore. Mr. Kraft’s better calling was that of a referee. Rising through the national ranks officiating matches in the American Professional League, the New York International League, the National Professional Soccer League and the North American Soccer League, Granny was named a FIFA Referee in 1956 and again from 1960 to 1966. His international experience included matches involving teams from Germany, Brazil, England, Scotland, Switzerland, Poland, Yugoslavia and the United States. Mr. Kraft resurrected the Old Timers Soccer Association in 1980 as well as the Maryland Soccer Hall of Fame and served as its president for ten years. He was inducted into the NISOA Hall of Fame in 1973 and the Maryland Soccer Hall of Fame in 1981. The US Soccer National Hall of Fame recognized him 1984, which gave him a triple honor. To recognize the achievements of referees, Mr. Kraft established the Referee Service award that bears his name in 1995 and is presented annually at the Maryland Soccer Hall of Fame dinner. Mr. Kraft passed away in 2010.

Another excellent playground player who performed with St. Elizabeth youth club was Paul Tamberino, a member of the 1972 McGuire Cup winner, the National Youth Championship. As the myth goes, Paul had a reputation of always arguing with referees. One referee challenged him to join if he thought it was that easy. That got Paul started, presiding over amateur leagues but quickly rising to collegiate, professional, national and international levels, not only as a referee but also as administrator and instructor. He earned the FIFA Assistant Referee Badge, was named outstanding Major League Soccer official for the years 1998 to 2001 while also serving both as a

National Instructor and Assessor for USSF. In 2002, Paul was the recipient of the Ray “Granny” Kraft Referee Service Award and was inducted into the NISOA Hall of Fame in 2004. The very next year in 2005, he was inducted into the Maryland Soccer Hall of Fame. Paul has retired from the soccer and lives in Florida.

The third member of the trio is Joe Manfre better known by his nickname “Meatball.” Joe was an accomplished goalkeeper at the high school, collegiate, professional and amateur levels. He was an All-MSA player at Patterson High School and won a four-year scholarship to the University of Baltimore, leading the team to two Mason Dixon titles. Joe also had a professional stint with the Baltimore Bays of the NASL in 1969. A member for numerous sides in Maryland Major that started during his high school days, Joe began officiating later in his playing career. He quickly earned a reputation as one of the top referees in the Baltimore area that included high school, collegiate, amateur and professional levels. Joe became a key figure in the professional indoor soccer scene when it made its way to Baltimore in 1979. He served as a referee and coordinator with the Baltimore Blast, the Baltimore Spirit and the Washington Warthogs as well as president of the Baltimore High School Officials Association. The 2000 recipient of the Ray “Granny” Kraft Referee Service Award, Joe was inducted into the Maryland Soccer Hall of Fame in 2002. Along with his friend Paul Tamborino, NISOA add Joe to their National Hall of Fame in 2004. Today, Joe is semi-retired from soccer officiating and lives in Delaware.

Special Tribute



Recognized for his playing skills, Nick Kropfelder was inducted into the US Soccer National Hall of Fame in 1996. He is seen in the photo above with his hands on the ball. After a professional career that included as a player with the Baltimore Americans in 1947, Nick picked up the whistle and was an accomplished referee in his own right. He also served as president of the Old Timers Soccer Association. Nick passed away in 2012.