

Why We Officiate

by Curt "Doc" Johnson

Why?

It's standing on the field listening to the National Anthem with your eyes closed and your hat over your heart, thanking God for your life and your country.

It's walking onto the field and seeing the relieved look on the face of a coach that knows he's got a great crew tonight.

It's the long drive to the game reviewing every detail of rules and mechanics and yet having time for a joke or two.

It's walking around the school or stadium looking for your locker room because the AD forgot to have someone meet you.

It's every story that begins with, "remember when..."

It's the genuine look of concern on your crew mates faces when one of your brothers has fallen, and the round of laughter shortly thereafter when it's obvious he's alright.

It's officiating a game shortly before and after your father dies because he taught you what honor is and to always do your duty.

It's sitting silently at the an association meeting listening to others figure out a complicated ruling and then having them turn to you and ask, "is that right?"

It's leaving your family for a 3 day clinic, and your wife supporting you in that decision and your dream, because she understands that if "it's not good for me, then it's not good for us."

It's bringing an extra pair of socks along just in case somebody forgets theirs.

It's meeting someone and finding out he's an official and immediately becoming friends because of that fact.

It's working through the sore muscles, bad knees and the smell of "Ben-Gay."

It's lost job wages, small game fees, and that smile on your face when someone says, "Your just doing this for the money."

It's the feel of your heart pounding before the coin toss as you reach into your pocket for the coin that isn't there.

It's finishing a 3rd grade game and having a 9 year old run up to you and sincerely say, "Thank you, Mr. Official."

It's hearing that a coach was putting you down behind your back, and that another official defended you by saying "he's the best official in the state."

It's having to "buy the first round" because you're the first one to get dirt on your knickers during the game.

It's that "one play" that happened years ago that your crew keeps talking about. You all know the one.

It's the 8 x 8 foot dressing room they give you with a shower head that barely works.

It's leading by the example of sportsmanship, and hoping some of that will rub off on players, coaches and other officials.

It's knowing that no matter what happens during the game, you'll get it right.

It's also knowing that the greatest sign of wisdom is realizing that you don't know everything.

It's Snickers bars, beef jerky and sodas made from fermented grains.

It's rule books, discussion boards, countless e-mails and good friends whose faces you have yet to see.

It's striving to be both a scholar of the rules, and a philosopher of the spirit of the game.

It's being perfect the first day and working to improve everyday thereafter.

It's knowing that you're a part of a tradition of honorable men, names of whom are mostly forgotten or weren't really known to begin with. But who still did their thankless jobs for the love of the game, and because it was the right thing to do.

It's all these things, and many, many more I'm sure, that keep all of us coming back for more, year after year, and wondering why . But then you step on the field again,..... take a deep breathand ask yourself, "where would I rather be than right here right now?"