

William Mara

From: "Bill Mara" <wbmara@hotmail.com>
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Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2004 10:00 AM
Subject: Dennis Hennigan - Referee Sugar Bowl

From: [Barry Lippencott](mailto:Barry.Lippencott)
To: wbmara@hotmail.com
Cc: b.lippencott@earthlink.net
Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2004 5:36 AM
Subject: Dennis Hennigan - Referee Sugar Bowl

> >
> >Bill,
> >
> >Here is an article from the local paper about Dennis Hennigan and his
> >selection to referee the National Championship Game.
> >
> >Dennis is still very active in the Empire Chapter and has been a great
> >contributor to the meetings. He is an inspiration to the younger
> >officials as to what you can achieve in the officiating world.
> >
> >Please ensure that this is posted on the EAIFO web site for the other
> >officials to know that one of our own did the National Championship Game.
> >
> >Thanks,
> >
> >Buck
> >
> >
> >>LOCAL REF GETS PLUM ASSIGNMENT
> >>CAMILLUS RESIDENT DENNIS HENNIGAN IS THE HEAD REFEREE FOR TONIGHT'S SUGAR
> >>BOWL.
> >>
> >>The Post-Standard
> >>Sunday, January 4, 2004
> >>
> >>
> >>BYLINE: By Dave Rahme Staff writer
> >>
> >>
> >>Dennis Hennigan will have the best seat in the house when No. 2 LSU faces
> >>No. 3 Oklahoma tonight in the Sugar Bowl for the Bowl Championship Series
> >>crowd.
> >>
> >>It could also be the hottest seat in the house.
> >>
> >>Hennigan, 50, a Camillus resident and an attorney for Mackenzie Hughes,
> >>will be the head referee when the Tigers (12-1) and Sooners (12-1) square
> >>off on national television for at least a share of the national title.
> >>

> >>"I'm thrilled, of course," Hennigan said. "This is the highest game you
> >>can do in college football. I never anticipated when I started that I
> >>would do a game like the national championship game. It's a long way from
> >>doing middle-school games in Camillus."
> >>
> >>A long time, too. Hennigan, a former player at Christian Brothers Academy
> >>and the University of Rochester, began officiating in 1976 as a way to
> >>stay involved in the game. He moved up through the ranks and became a Big
> >>East official in 1998.
> >>
> >>"I love the game of football," he said. "We all have egos, and it's
> >>certainly a boost to your ego to do a Miami-Virginia Tech game or a game
> >>in the Carrier Dome on national TV."
> >>
> >>Hennigan's ego got another boost when John Soffey, the league's
> >>coordinator of football officiating, called and asked if Hennigan would
> >>be interested in heading the crew that will work the title game. The call
> >>ended a three-year wait for Hennigan and the 47 other Big East officials
> >>who were hoping to be selected to the seven-man crew. It was the Big
> >>East's turn to work the title game in 2002, but league member Miami's
> >>presence in the big game in each of the last two years kept Hennigan and
> >>Co. on the sideline.
> >>
> >>"To be chosen is an honor," Hennigan said. "I'm thrilled."
> >>
> >>Hennigan's specific on-field duty will be to "take care of the
> >>quarterbacks" from his position in the offensive backfield. From that
> >>vantage point he can spot infractions such as illegal procedure and
> >>offensive holding, but his main task is making sure no defender goes
> >>outside of the rules to rough up a QB.
> >>
> >>"Everybody watches the quarterback until he lets go of the ball,"
> >>Hennigan said. "Then they follow the ball. I'm probably the only guy who
> >>continues to watch the quarterback (for late hits)."
> >>
> >>As the head referee, Hennigan also will be the captain of the crew and
> >>will be responsible for administration of the game. He will be in the
> >>spotlight whenever a flag is thrown, as he will be consulted by the
> >>official who witnesses the infraction and then announce the penalty to
> >>the fans and the TV audience via a microphone attached to his belt.
> >>
> >>"Hopefully, you won't see much of me," he said. "The other six officials
> >>may disagree, but I think mine is the toughest job out there. It's also
> >>the most enjoyable because of the interaction you have with the coaches."
> >>
> >>Enjoyable interaction with coaches during the heat of a big college
> >>football game? Hennigan laughed when asked exactly how enjoyable that
> can be.
> >>
> >>"Well, as an official you have to be able to step back and remove
> >>yourself from all the emotion going on around you," he said. "When I
> >>first started I got some good advice from a veteran official, who told me
> >>that as an official you can never meet emotion with emotion. You can't
> >>respond to emotion with emotion. Those coaches, their livelihood is at
> >>stake. You expect them to become emotionally involved. It doesn't
> bother me."
> >>

> >>Nor does the reaction of fans to an unpopular call or the fact that every
> >>controversial play or call is shown in slow motion and from several
> >>different angles for TV viewers to witness.
> >>
> >>"As long as you're confident in your ability and your fellow officials'
> >>ability, that really never enters the picture," Hennigan said. "Once the
> >>game starts, I don't even think about the hoopla. When I'm on the mike, I
> >>don't even think about it."
> >>
> >>Being able to block out the surroundings is a skill that comes with
> >>nearly three decades of officiating football games. Hennigan said he
> >>tries to remind himself and his fellow officials that regardless of the
> >>scope or the stakes, once the whistle blows it's still just a football
> >>game, played on the same 100-yard field the middle-schoolers in Camillus
> >>compete on.
> >>
> >>There is no denying this one will be different, though.
> >>
> >>"Every game, I get the same kind of nervousness and apprehension
> >>beforehand that I had when I was a player," Hennigan said. "I'm sure I'll
> >>be nervous this time. What's interesting in this case is what's at stake
> >>- the national championship."
> >>
> >>To defuse those nerves, Hennigan said he will stick to his usual pregame
> >>routine as closely as possible. He will travel to New Orleans on Jan. 1
> >>for the Jan. 4 game and will do some sightseeing and attend a few Sugar
> >>Bowl meetings. He and his fellow officials will review "game film" of
> >>their most recent performance.
> >>
> >>He will arrive at the Superdome three hours before kickoff and will
> >>huddle with his fellow officials shortly afterward. He will meet with
> >>each head coach 90 minutes before the game, and beginning one hour before
> >>the game he will join a rotating two-man shift of officials assigned to
> >>the field at all times to make sure there are no incidents between teams
> >>during pregame warmups. Ten to 15 minutes before the game starts, all the
> >>officials will enter the field.
> >>
> >>"As the game gets closer, you just want it to start," Hennigan said.
> >>"Once it does, it's just a football game, and you do your job."
> >>
> >>This time, millions of people will be watching the guy from Camillus
> >>doing his job. He hopes they won't see too much of him.