

PFRA/NFLRA History

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL REFEREES ASSOCIATION – 1972 – 2000

and

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE REFEREES ASSOCIATION – 2000 – present

1966 - 1974

In July 1966, prior to the regular Clinic for National Football League (NFL) officials in Chicago, Stan Javie announced to those assembled that an organization was being formed to represent the officials in negotiations with the NFL, primarily, to improve game fees. An opposing faction, led by Tommy Bell, argued that the officials did not need a formal organization to represent them in their discussions with the League. Following a heated discussion, the plan to organize was approved by a vote of 34-17. The organization would be financed through a dues structure of \$50 per year and a committee was named to go to New York to meet with Commissioner Pete Rozelle. The committee was made up of Stan Javie, Mike Lisetski, Ed Marion, Joe Muha, and George Rennix.

Although the AFL and the NFL did not officially merge until 1970, 34 men from the AFL officiating staff attended the 1968 pre-season Clinic along with 53 NFL officials. When the group assembled for the first time at the Writer's Inn in Denver, the new men were asked to join the yet unnamed officials' organization.

In 1969, 34 AFL officials again joined 50 NFL officials for the pre-season Clinic. All six new hires in 1969 were placed on the AFL's roster. The AFL staff, under Mel Hein, worked the AFL's final season and the NFL's staff, under the direction of Art McNally, worked the NFL games. There was one mixed crew with Jack Vest, Leo Miles, and Sonny Gamber representing the AFL, and Frank Sinkovitz, Bruce Alford, and Tony Skover representing the NFL. All officiating matters were handled by the NFL Officiating Department.

In 1970, the merger of the staffs was completed when 33 AFL officials (George Young died prior to the 1970 season) joined 51 NFL officials. The group remained informally organized under President Ed Marion until May 1971 when it incorporated.

On Saturday, March 25, 1972, the organization's first Board of Directors (as voted by the membership) met in St. Louis and elected the following officers: President Ed Marion, Vice-

President Ben Dreith, Secretary-Treasurer Joe Muha, and At-Large Directors Bill O'Brien and Jack Reader. At that time, it also assumed the name the Professional Football Referees Association (the "PFRA"), which continued until changed in 2001. The lawyer drawing up the forms of incorporation thought of all the officials as referees, and thus the name. Marion liked the ring to PFRA as opposed to PFOA, and so we remained until the year 2000 misnamed and, for the most part, misunderstood.

1974 - 1975

In 1974, Ed Marion was named to a new office, Executive Director (for life); Ben Dreith was elected President; Jim Tunney Vice-President; and Jerry Bergman began a 14-year term as Secretary-Treasurer. Serving as At-Large Directors were Jimmie Cole and Jack Fette. At that time, Marion held the strong opinion that the officials in the NFL should have a pension. When confronted, the Commissioner refused to even hear of such a thing, and Marion threatened to go to the owners. Again, Tommy Bell did not approve of such action and had a letter distributed and signed by those members opposed to this action. Despite the opposition, Marion, Bergman, and Dreith went to the NFL Owners Meeting in Florida. Marion was given 20 minutes to make his plea, after which only two minor questions were voiced, one by Jim Finks and the other by Carroll Rosenbloom. The owners then voted to grant all officials retiring in 1974 and thereafter a pension of \$200 per month. Since this plan did not provide benefits back to 1968, it did not include several men who were instrumental in the organization's founding. The membership voted to fund a similar pension for the 10 officials who retired in the 1968-1973 time period: Bud Brubaker, Bob Finley, Walt Fitzgerald, Elvin Hutchinson, Mike Lisetski, Jack McDonough, Joe Muha, "Red" Pace, George Rennix, and Bill Schleibaum. Each active official was assessed \$150 in 1974, \$50 in 1976, and \$100 in 1977 and 1978 to fund this pension plan. The rookie assessment of \$150 was increased to \$200 in 1977 and \$250 in 1984 to continue the pension for the survivors of that group. In 2009, Fitzgerald was the last surviving member of that group, collecting a \$600 per month pension paid by the Association. It should be noted that Hutchinson, with strong support from the West Coast, was included in the pension plan although he never worked under the revised NFL structure. He was part of the AFL staff that joined with the NFL in 1968, but he retired in 1969. It was argued that he had worked in the NFL from 1952-1959 and should be, and was, included.

In 1975, the corporate structure was changed to that of a non-profit organization (certainly no misnomer in that).

1976 - 1987

From 1976 to 1987, the Association and the League led a relatively quiet co-existence with Marion and Bergman being the primary negotiators for game fees with Commissioner Pete Rozelle and working conditions with Director of Officiating Art McNally. During this time, the office of the President was held by Jim Tunney, 1976-80; Art Demmas, 1980-82; Red Cashion, 1982-84; Gene Barth, 1984-86; and Al Conway, 1986-88.

In 1987, the Association decided it was time for a change. With Marion due to retire as an on-field official, it was decided that he should retain his position of Executive Director and do so on a fee basis paid by the Association. At a meeting in Chicago, the Board recommended and the membership agreed that Marion be hired as Executive Director for \$30,000 per year. Marion's fee was comprised of \$20,000 paid by the Association and \$10,000 from a shoe contract he had recently negotiated. Marion's duties as the chief administrator of the organization continued as they were before, now unfettered by his role as an on-field official.

1988-1995

Jerry Markbreit served as president for 1988-89 and was succeeded in 1990-92 by Bob Boylston.

In late 1991, a bitter split was developing on the Board and within the organization regarding the duties of, and a need for, a full-time paid Executive Director. As the 1992 Annual Meeting approached, Marion was asked to relinquish his post, and the membership was asked to select Markbreit to replace him as Executive Director without pay. Markbreit reluctantly agreed to serve.

In 1992, the Association, through the efforts of Secretary John Keck, printed its newly formatted "Annual Book," containing pertinent address and telephone data and pictures of all officials. During his term in office as Secretary, Keck also initiated an "as needed" newsletter, "The Official Word," to keep officials and retired members abreast of current events affecting the PFRA and its members. Bob McElwee was elected President for 1992-94, as the organization looked forward to the coming dramatic change in the role of the PFRA to its membership. In September 1992, the Association hired Tom Condon, a highly respected player's agent, to represent the PFRA in its negotiations with the League Office for increased game fees and pensions.

At the 1993 Annual Meeting, Markbreit was appointed to a five-year term as Executive Director and the annual dues were increased to \$100, the first increase in the Association's history. In 1993, the Association began to honor officials by placing an official's picture and number on the

Annual Book cover with a brief testimonial on the inside of the front cover. In 1993, Norm Schachter's #56 was the first number so acknowledged.

At the Annual Meeting held May 22, 1994 in Dallas, labor attorney Mike Arnold explained the procedure for "organizing" as a labor union. At the conclusion of the meeting, the membership and Board voted to hire Mike as Legal Counsel and authorized initiating proceedings with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to designate the PFRA as the bargaining representative for game officials. The NLRB conducted an election and game officials voted unanimously in favor of the PFRA. On August 18, 1994, the NLRB issued its formal "Certification of Representative" designating the PFRA as the exclusive bargaining representative for NFL game officials. Following negotiations, the first Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the NFL was agreed to in late September 1994 and ratified by the membership in November 1994. The CBA provided substantial increases in game fees and pensions. Officials already on pensions also received a substantial increase. The CBA also included a first-time-ever exclusive marketing agreement with NFL Properties for which the PFRA received \$400,000 per year.

At the Annual Meeting in July 1994, Ron Blum was seated as the 11th President to serve the PFRA membership in the 23 years since its incorporation. In 1994, under the leadership of Gary Lane, the PFRA formed PFRA-Charities, under a separate corporate structure, to facilitate the organization's participation in fundraising and other charitable activities. PFRA-Charities had its own officers including several PFRA officers for general oversight. The organization's main fundraising activities were the "Zebra Open," a golf tournament held each year in conjunction with the NFL Officials Clinic, and the sale of the Super Bowl raffle tickets. The 1994 Annual Book honoree was Stan Javie's #29.

In 1995, the Membership approved the first Articles of Association and By-Laws (By-Laws) to govern the Union at its Annual Meeting in July. Warren Welsh retired NFL Security Chief, received the newly established "Friend for Life" Award at the 1995 Annual Recognition Dinner, and Art McNally's #35 was featured on the 1995 Annual Book.

1996-2000

After several difficult years of internal and external struggles, the Association looked forward to a 1996 Annual Meeting filled with fellowship and talk of the upcoming season. The Association held its first election as an NLRB organization, which dictated three-year terms and specific election procedures. To come into compliance in an orderly fashion only the President, Dale Hamer, the Vice-President, Gerald Austin, and one At-Large Director Ed Hochuli were elected to office in 1996.

[Note: To reach full compliance, Ben Montgomery was reelected Secretary along with, Mike Carey and Jeff Bergman At-Large Directors in 1997. In 1998, all remaining incumbents were re-elected to three-year terms: Jerry Markbreit, Executive-Director, Rex Stuart, Treasurer, and Ron Baynes and Bill Carollo At-Large Directors.]

Although the PFRA had voluntarily agreed to drug testing in 1990, the major issue facing the Association was the League's desire for a formal Drug and Alcohol Policy for its officials. After a year of tough negotiation and some hard feelings, the Board recommended and the membership approved a "Guideline for Conduct of NFL Officials," covering drugs, alcohol, and gambling in August 1996. The annual dues were increased to \$200 to meet rising costs. The 1996 Annual Book official honoree was Jack Fette's #39.

At the Annual Meeting in 1997, in accordance with the Association's By-Laws procedure for filling vacancies on the Board, Rex Stuart was appointed to fill the unexpired term of retiring Treasurer Bob Moore, and Ron Baynes was appointed to fill the then vacant At-Large Director post. At the Annual Recognition Dinner, Charlie Jackson, retired NFL Security Chief, received the Association's second "Friend for Life" Award, Tom "TK" Kelleher's #25 was acknowledged on the 1997 Annual Book, and Ed Marion and Jerry Bergman were presented the Association's first "Distinguished Service" Awards for their tireless effort in the founding and development of the PFRA.

The Annual Meeting in May 1998 included the Association's first change to their By-Laws. The Board proposed and the organization approved that an inactive official could be appointed/elected to the position of Executive Director, thus paving the way for Jerry Markbreit to remain in office after his pending retirement at the close of the 1998 season. At the 1998 Annual Dinner, the Association presented its 11 past Presidents a carved glass gavel with slate base in appreciation for the leadership they provided the PFRA. Bob Beek's #59 was acknowledged on the 1998 Annual Book. During the season, the Association lost its Treasurer when Rex Stuart had to accept a career-ending injury retirement. Rex was the first official to receive this benefit, which was included in the 1994 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Jim Daopoulos was named to fill Stuart's unexpired term as Treasurer.

In May 1999, Ed Hochuli was elected President for the 1999-2002 Term, and Scott Steenson was elected an At-Large Director. Ben Montgomery, running unopposed, was named Vice-President by acclamation of the Board. With Montgomery's move to the Vice-President's chair, Jim Quirk was appointed Interim Secretary at the Annual Meeting on May 15, 1999. In other business, the term for all elected offices was changed to commence on May 1 and conclude on April 30 to allow for a smooth transition at the May Annual Meeting. At the recommendation of the Board and unanimous approval of the membership, the definition of "membership" was expanded to include an Associate Member. This level of membership would include any

professional (NFL Europe/Arena) or NCAA Division-I official, who through the payment of a small membership fee, could participate in PFRA sponsored Clinics and/or other such events. At the Annual Dinner, outgoing officers Dale Hamer and Gerald Austin were commended for their many years of faithful service to the Association. Hamer was presented his "President's Glass Gavel," and Jim Tunney was acknowledged by having his number #32 featured on the 1999 Annual Book.

Effective January 1, 2000, the Board regretfully accepted the resignation of Jerry Markbreit as Executive Director. Jerry was a member of the Board since 1985 and served as Executive Director since 1992. His outstanding leadership as Executive Director was formally acknowledged by the Board. Bill Carollo was appointed to fill the un-expired term of Executive Director and Mark Baltz was appointed to fill Carollo's At-Large Director's seat. In the spring of 2000, Jim Daopoulos accepted a position as Assistant Supervisor of officials and resigned as Treasurer. The Board appointed Mark Baltz to fill Jim Daopoulos' unexpired term as Treasurer and named Rick Patterson an At-Large Director replacing Baltz. In April 2000, Jim Quirk, running unopposed, was named Secretary by acclamation of the Board and Jeff Bergman was re-elected an At-Large Director. Bill Lovett was also elected an At-Large Director replacing Mike Carey. At the Annual Meeting in May 2000, the membership approved a \$2,000 assessment per official for the 2000 season. With our CBA expiring on March 1, 2001, this money was to be used to fund unusual expenses incurred during the pending contract negotiations and would be returned to the officials if not needed. The other significant event was the changing of the Association's name from PFRA to the National Football League Referees Association (NFLRA) effective May 6, 2000. This was done to better convey to all, "Who we are and what we are." At the Annual Awards Dinner, Fritz Graf was acknowledged by having his #34 appear on the cover of the 2000 Annual Book. Mike Woodard, an original member of the Charities Board, was named Executive Director of PFRA Charities.

2001-2005

In May 2001, Mark Baltz was elected to a full term as Treasurer and Rick Patterson was elected to a full term as an At-Large Director. Mike Carey returned to the Board as an At-Large Director replacing Ron Baynes. Mike Lisetski's #16 was acknowledged on the cover of the 2001 Annual Book. In addition, to being an outstanding official and early spokesman for the officials, Lisetski was our oldest living retired NFL Official. An NFLRA site became fully operational for posting important online messages to the active and retired officials, on a need-to-know basis. The fall of 2001 marked a new era for the NFLRA as failure to reach a new CBA settlement prior to the start of the 2001 season led to a Lockout of the officials by the NFL. For the first time in the League's history, replacement officials (scabs) worked the last pre-season game and the first

game of the 2001 regular season. The second week of the season was cancelled due to the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. Following intensive negotiations by our representative Tom Condon and our negotiating team, the membership voted to accept a new CBA and return to the field for the third week of the regular season. The new CBA included substantial compensation and pension increases for the officials, first-class travel for all games and a one-time Special Severance Settlement of 150% of earned severance to each official electing to take early-retirement at the end of the 2001 season (and several others promised grandfathered inclusions). Sixteen officials retired at the end of the season. A 10% increase in pension benefits was given to all retired officials. Most of the \$2,000 assessment charged the officials in the 2000 season was returned to the officials.

In May of 2002, Jeff Bergman was elected President, Scott Steenson Vice-President, and Scott Green an At-Large Director. Jeff Triplette was appointed to fill Bergman's unexpired term as an At-Large Director. Outgoing President Ed Hochuli's outstanding efforts in leading the organization through the Lockout were wholeheartedly acknowledged. Ed Marion, NFLRA Founder, was honored with his #26 appearing on the cover of the 2002 Annual Book and Nick Skorich was presented the Association's third "Friend for Life" Award.

At the July 2002 Clinic, the NFL presented the first Art McNally Award to Bob McElwee for his years of dedicated service to the League, officiating, and his community. The NFLRA - Retired Members, who attended the 2002 Annual Meeting as guests of the NFLRA, had their first formal organizational meeting. The group accepted a proposed By-laws structure (primarily for the election of officers) and elected Bob Boylston as their President, Don Wedge as Vice-president and Dale Hamer as Secretary-Treasurer. President Boylston appointed Wedge as the liaison person for all deceased members surviving spouses. Hamer was tasked to communicate regularly with the over 100 retired members on the e-mail network and annually with all others.

In May 2003, Jim Quirk was again named Secretary by acclamation of the Board. Bill Lovett was re-elected, and Jeff Triplette elected an At-Large Director. Jerry Bergman's #17 became the 11th official to be so honored by having his number placed on the cover of the 2003 Annual Book. This was done in recognition of his outstanding officiating career and acknowledgement of his tireless effort in support of the founding and development of the PFRA/NFLRA. At the July 2003 Clinic, the NFL presented the second Art McNally Award to Ben Montgomery. Through the efforts of the Association, it was also announced that the League agreed to purchase Super Bowl rings for the 20 living Super Bowl officials that never received a ring. At the Annual Meeting in Dallas, May 2004 they were given their rings and were also guests of the NFLRA.

In May 2004, Bill Carollo was re-elected Executive Director, Mark Baltz was elected Treasurer, and Mike Carey and Carl Paganelli were elected At-Large Directors. Ben Dreith's #12 appeared

on the cover of the 2004 Annual Book in recognition of his work as a founding member of the PFRA, our first Vice-President, and his outstanding 31-year NFL officiating career. At the NFL July 2004 Clinic, Tom Fincken received the third Art McNally Award.

Jeff Bergman was re-elected the NFLRA President in 2005, becoming the first to do so. Scott Green was elected Vice-President succeeding Scott Steenson who left the Board, and Garth DeFelice was elected an At-Large Director replacing Green. Honored on the cover of the 2005 Annual Book was Lou Palazzi's #51. Lou had a prominent 30-year career as an umpire in the NFL after playing in the NFL for the New York Giants. Gerald Austin was named the fourth Art McNally Award at the July 2005 Clinic. After the 17 Replay Assistants successfully petitioned the NLRB for recognition as a bargaining unit with the League office, the NFLRA was certified by the NLRB as their exclusive bargaining agent in seeking a CBA with the NFL.

2006-2009

Several noteworthy events occurred in 2006 in the NFLRA. With the resignation of Bill Carollo as Executive Director, Tim Millis, a retired NFL official and Supervisor of Officials in the Big 12, was appointed the full-time Executive Director. Bill was honored at the May 2006 Annual Meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona for his contributions and service to the NFLRA. The Negotiating Committee chaired by Jeff Bergman, along with Scott Green, Jeff Triplette, Tim Millis, Bill Carollo and Mike Arnold negotiated with League officers for 20 months before accepting a new CBA with the League. The details were presented to the Board of Directors on September 15 and, upon acceptance of same, were presented and ratified by the Association on Friday, September 22 at a three-hour meeting in Dallas. The new deal included salary and pension enhancements, a playoff pool, travel pay, and health club payments, as well as, pension improvements for all retired officials. Game officials were introduced to the newly redesigned black and white striped shirts with numbers on the sleeve and back as opposed to the back and front in previous uniforms. Also a long black pant with a white stripe down the outside of each leg will be worn during cold weather games. Jim Quirk was re-elected to his third term as Secretary and Bill Lovett and Jeff Triplette were re-elected At-Large Directors. Al Conway's #27 adorned the cover of the 2006 Annual Book in recognition of his notable 29-year career, including four Super Bowls, and service to the NFLRA. The Annual Meeting was held in Scottsdale, Arizona. The fifth Annual Art McNally Award was presented to Larry Nemmers at the July 2006 Clinic. Beginning in 2006 the NFLRA increased its efforts and activities relating to educational and charitable endeavors. Participation in Grass Roots officiating clinics was expanded. Each official made payroll deduction gifts of \$100 to Susan G. Komen and the V Foundation, and a preseason game crew assisted the Habitat for Humanity in building a home for a Hurricane Katrina victim.

In June 2007, the NFLRA Replay Assistants and the League agreed to their first CBA. As an unopposed candidate, Mark Baltz was elected Treasurer for a second three-year term and Tim Millis was elected Executive Director for a three-year term by acclamation of the Executive Board. Carl Paganelli was elected for a second term and Joe Larrew was elected to his first term as At-Large Directors. Jerry Markbreit's #9 was featured on the cover of the 2007 Annual Book and was honored at the 2007 Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida for his officiating career and numerous contributions to the NFLRA. At the July 2007 Clinic, the sixth Annual Art McNally Award was presented to Paul Widener.

In March 2008, Bill Lovett resigned from the Board following his appointment as the League's Training Coordinator of Officials and Duke Carroll was appointed to fill his unexpired term as an At-Large Director. Later in the year, Scott Green was elected President, Jeff Triplette was elected Vice-President, and Tony Steratore was elected to his first term as At-Large Director. John Parry was appointed to fill Jeff Triplette's unexpired term as an At-Large Director. Bob McElwee's #95 was featured on the cover of the 2008 Annual Book and was honored at the 2008 Annual Meeting in Tucson, Arizona for his officiating career and contributions to the NFLRA. Outgoing President Jeff Bergman was honored for his tenacity and outgoing leadership of the PFRA/NFLRA over the past 11 years and three CBA contract negotiations. The Board dissolved its PFRA Charities arm and its functions were incorporated under the guidance of the NFLRA Executive Director in 2008. The seventh Annual Art McNally Award was presented to Bill Carollo at the July clinic in 2008. Officiating crews made visits to wounded veterans at Walter Reed and other area hospitals when assigned games in the Washington area. Two referees made headlines during the 2008 season - Mike Carey became the first African-American to referee a Super Bowl and Al Riveron became the first Hispanic-American to referee an NFL game. Also, during the season the officials wore the white knickers with a black stripe down the pant leg for the first time. Membership voted to revise the By-Laws and raise dues to \$750 per season for on-field officials, \$250 per season for replay assistants, and maintained the \$250 Initiation Fee. On a sadder note Ed Marion, our first President and Executive Director passed away in April 2008.

In 2009 the Board started the year by issuing a strong letter of support for the Training Program supervised by Bill Lovett. The program included a cadre of some of the legions of NFL officiating that included Ron Botchan, Red Cashion, Tom Fincken, Dean Look, Jerry Markbreit, Ben Montgomery, Jim Quirk, Bill Schmitz and Sid Semon. Jim Quirk became a trainer that year after 10 years of loyal and conscientious service to the NFLRA as the Secretary. Additional Board changes included Joe Larrew replaced Quirk as Secretary and Carl Cheffers and Greg Meyer were elected At-Large Directors. Dale Hamer's #104 was featured on the cover of the 2009 Annual Book, and he was honored at the 2009 Annual Meeting at the Doral in Miami, Florida for his officiating career and significant contributions to the PFRA/NFLRA.

The season started with Mike Pereira announcing this would be his last season as Vice President of Officiating. Mike served in that capacity after replacing Jerry Seeman in 2001 through the 2009 season. During the 2009 season, each referee had a hard drive with all the video of each game-TV, replays and coaches tape. Additionally, every official and trainer could access the plays via NFL games each week from the NFL officiating website. For the first time, all officials were provided permanent credentials for NFL games. This season also marked the 50th anniversary of the AFL Conference. Certain teams wore the old AFL throwback uniforms as did some of the officiating crews. The uniform consisted of a white hat for everyone except the referee- who wore a black hat with orange piping. The jersey was orange and white striped with no pocket and the AFL patch over the left breast, with large numbers on the back. Pants were white bloomers and the socks were all black. Additionally, officials wore pink sweatbands and special hats for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure Breast Cancer Awareness games in October. Our participation in charitable and related fundraising activities increased as the NFLRA continued to purchase 24 Super Bowl tickets and donate those to National and Regional charities for their fundraising activities such as raffles, auctions and drawings. The proceeds from these activities together with other NFLRA charitable activities and on-field & replay officials' charitable payroll contributions meant that the NFLRA charitable work has grown to over \$150,000 annually.

Other important activities that would pay dividends down the road were the initiation of meetings with DeMaurice Smith, new Executive Director of the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) and the development of a membership survey under Tony Steratore's leadership that would be conducted in early 2010 in preparation of the Collective Bargaining negotiations.

2010 - 2011

In March of 2010, Carl Johnson, an official with nine years of experience, became the Vice President of NFL Officials. Dean Blandino was also given a new title as Replay Supervisor. In April, the Annual Meeting was held in Summerlin, Nevada outside of Las Vegas. Al Jury (#106) was honored as the Annual Honoree. Al had a 26-year career that included five Super Bowls and later served as a position trainer and Replay official.

The survey noted earlier, was completed and presented to the membership at the Annual Meeting. The highlights of the survey pointed to the importance of the pension, grading and evaluation of officials, better pay and total compensation, and unity of our membership. All these issues would become important in 2011. In an effort to address some of the unity issues, an ad-hoc Diversity Committee was created and all other Committees were expanded to include at least one non-board of director member.

The League agreed to the NFLRA request to wear a "BL" patch on their hats that season in honor of Bob Lawing, an active 13-year official who passed away in May after a courageous battle with cancer. At the NFLRA's urging in a letter to Commissioner Goodell, a notice went out to all coaches that inappropriate on-field behavior will be penalized and fined after several situations occurred with coaches. Also, in December two games were postponed due to snow storms. In Minnesota on December 12, the roof partially collapsed causing the Vikings vs. New York Giants game to be played the next day in Detroit. Also, two weeks later a snow storm forced the postponement of the Minnesota vs. Philadelphia Sunday night game to Tuesday night in Philadelphia. This was the first time in NFL history of a game being played on Tuesday. There were several wild stories of officials trying to get to their games because of weather that year.

The 2011 season began with the announcement of Red Cashion (#43) being selected as the Annual Honoree. Red had a 25-year career that included numerous play-off games and two Super Bowls. He also served as the Association President in 1982 – 84 and as a Referee Trainer for many years. The Annual Meeting was held in San Antonio, TX. Scott Green was re-elected as the President, Jeff Triplette as Vice-President and Tony Steratore as an At-Large Director.

The membership was quite concerned about the grading and evaluation system that many thought was unfair. In meetings with the NFL in May, Tim Millis and Scott Green expressed those concerns and requested changes to address issues such as an exclusive negative grading system and the need to better clarify the 20% subjective grading criteria. But in the end, little was done, and grievance would be filed late in the year.

In an emotional meeting at the July clinic, Bill Lovett appeared in a wheel chair to thank his many brothers in the NFLRA and to say goodbye. He would pass away two weeks later, but his Training Program would live on and the officials would all wear "WRL" patches on their hats in his honor for the season.

The question was, "Would there be a season?" The NFL players had been locked out in March and as the pre-season approached, it was unclear if there be any games played this season. A settlement was reached on July 25 between the NFL and the NFLPA, and the only game cancelled was the Hall of Fame game.

After many requests to begin negotiations on our new contract, the League finally agreed to the first real meeting in early November, in which the NFLRA team submitted a proposal modeled after the 2006 CBA agreement. Although the League reps said they would meet again before the end of the year, it never happened. As mentioned earlier, a grievance was filed stating the entire evaluation system was inconsistent and unfair and should be replaced.

2012

The 2012 Season would become one of the proudest moments in NFLRA history. The unity and commitment of 121 strong would prove to be the bond that weathered a second lockout by the NFL of its professional game officials (the first back in 2001) and the hiring of replacement (scab) officials for 112 days. The signs were there early on that the League was stalling in negotiations. They were late in responding, and they were proposing less than half the raises we received in the 2006 contract where there was little in dispute. A more troubling concern was the League's desire to eliminate our defined benefit plan that had been in place since 1974 and replace it with a defined contribution plan. Some said the League was pleased with its recent negotiations with the players and felt the NFLRA would cave quickly as the season approached.

In April at a meeting in Atlanta, the NFLRA negotiating team was told by League owners, "We were on another planet" and Bob Batterman, outside counsel joined the League's negotiating team. Scott Green asked DeMaurice Smith, Executive Director NFLPA what he knew about Batterman and he responded, "Lockout Bob --- You guys are getting locked out." He was correct; on June 4 negotiations stopped, as the NFL had already sent out recruitment letters to hire scabs two days before.

Through the summer months there was little negotiation, but through Ed Hochuli's leadership, study sessions, even without new rule or casebooks, continued by phone. Every effort was made to hold strong and let the scabs take the field in pre-season. That they did, and it was a disaster. It was not long before players, fans, and the media called for an end to the lockout.

After three disastrous weeks of the regular season that ended on a horrible call incorrectly giving the Seattle Seahawks a victory over the Green Bay Packers, the country was up in arms and coming down hard on NFL owners and the Commissioner. Those voicing their displeasure included President Barack Obama and Republican Governor from Wisconsin, Scott Walker, who put out statements saying this lockout should end immediately. All of this pressure resulted in negotiations restarting the day after the Monday Night Football fiasco. An agreement between the NFLRA and NFL officials quickly resulted after some favorable changes in the NFL's negotiating position, and on Thursday night to the cheers and good wishes from fans, players and coaches, the NFL's real professional officials were back on the field.

There were many reasons that the NFLRA members stuck together, but mostly it had to do with fairness and respect. These were the characteristics that we all had learned from those that came before us in the PFRA and NFLRA.

In finishing up the year, all pending grievances for various travel fees and post season assignments were settled as part of the new CBA. To say the least, it was a very good year for the NFLRA membership.

2013 - 2016

Following the lockout year of 2012, 2013 began with Jerome Boger, the second African-American official to be a Super Bowl crew chief, leading the Super Bowl XLVII crew in New Orleans where the stadium lights failed. The failure, which occurred minutes into the third quarter, lasted 34 minutes before play resumed. Dean Blandino was named the new VP of Officiating, replacing Carl Johnson who returned to the on-field officiating staff, and Alberto Riveron retired from the field and was named Senior Director of Officiating, both immediately after the Super Bowl. The annual spring membership meeting was held at the Ft. Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa the last week of April where the nine trainers (Red Cashion, Jerry Markbreit, Ron Botchan, Jim Quirk, Sid Semon, Ben Montgomery, Dean Look, Tom Fincken and Billy Schmitz) who refused to train the scabs during the 2012 Lockout were honored as the Annual Honoree. Also honored at the meeting was the late Bill Lovett after whom the training program is named. Executive Director Tim Millis did not stand for reelection and Jim Quirk, who ran unopposed, was elected the new Executive Director. Mark Baltz was again elected as Treasurer (he also ran unopposed) and Carl Cheffers and Carl Paganelli were reelected as At-Large Directors. On June 30, 2013, President Scott Green resigned as President and Vice-President Jeff Triplette assumed the Presidency. At-Large Director Tony Steratore was appointed by the Board to the open Vice-President position, and James Coleman was appointed by the Board to fill the unexpired term At-Large Director's term of Tony Steratore. During the summer, the League tried unsuccessfully to hire and implement fulltime officials – the Union refused to accept the League's requirement that any fulltime official would be an at-will employee contrary to the 2012 CBA. The League did implement per the 2012 CBA its first group of college officials to its Advanced Development Program (ADP) to begin their preparation to potentially joining the League as on-field game officials. The League also changed the official's pants from white knickers to black slacks. The League and Replay Officials agreed to a new CBA on September 27, 2013 as well which increased the pay and benefits. The Board during the fall approved a \$10,000 donation to the Estes Park School District, Colorado to help rebuild its athletic complex following a devastating flash flood. Later that fall, the former Senior Director of Officiating Jerry Seeman passed away after a prolonged illness. Finally, the Board approved matching each crew's holiday donation up to \$1,000 per crew to each crew's selected 501 (c)(3) charity henceforth.

The year 2014 began with Super Bowl XLVIII being played outdoors in the cold weather environment of MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ. Treasurer Mark Baltz retired in March and Greg Meyer was appointed by the Board to fill Mark's unexpired term as Treasurer. The Annual Meeting was held at the JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa in April, and Bob

Boylston was recognized as the Annual Honoree. Jeff Triplette and Tony Steratore ran unopposed as President and Vice-President respectively and Derick Bowers was elected to a three-year term as an At-Large Director. The League hired 13 new officials during the spring and summer following many retirements of on-field game officials. New hire Brad Allen was also made a crew chief – a first for the NFL. The League also centralized all replay reviews with the Art McNally Command Center being part of the decision-making process during all replay reviews. The Union also adopted a new logo (a drawing of an official giving a touchdown signal inside a circle with the words NFL Referees Association) during the fall. The Union also made a \$5,000 donation to the “A Call to Men” organization (a national violence prevention group aimed at keeping men and boys from abusing women and children) which the League matched.

In 2015, the term “Deflategate” was born following the AFC Championship Game between Indianapolis and New England where the Patriots were accused of using under-inflated footballs during the first half of the game. Super Bowl XLIX was held in Phoenix, AZ as was the Union’s Annual Meeting. The Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa hosted the meeting at which Bill Carollo was recognized as the Annual Honoree and Carl Paganelli, Sr. was designated a “Friend for Life.” That spring the Union changed its fiscal year to May 1 through April 30; and the League and Union agreed to amend the CBA to allow all game officials with two years of experience or more to share in the postseason bonus pool. Joe Larrew ran unopposed for reelection to the Secretary position, and Wayne Mackie was reelected and Jeff Seeman elected to three-year At-Large Director positions. The League added 10 new officials to the staff including Sarah Thomas – the first female game official – while increasing the overall staff size from 119 to 122 by adding three swing positions. The League also exercised its CBA rights to centralize all game officials’ annual physicals, uniform fitting and physical assessment to late May in New York City and the NY Giants training facility. Finally, the membership amended the Union’s By-Laws during the fall to make the Executive Director’s position a Board appointed position after the current Executive Director Jim Quirk’s tenure ends.

2016

2016 began with Super Bowl L (50) being played in Levi Stadium, Santa Clara, CA. Charities supported by the NFLRA raised \$169,901 from donations tied to accessing the 24 Super Bowl tickets the Union had provided these charities. The Union also put in place a disability policy for all game officials which would pay an official up to \$6,000 per month were that official be unable to work on the field due to a non-NFL job related illness or injury. The Annual Meeting was held at the PGA National Golf Club, and Ben Montgomery was recognized as the Annual Honoree. Greg Meyer was unopposed for reelection as Treasurer and Carl Cheffers and Carl Paganelli were reelected to three-year terms as At-Large Directors. During the summer, the League initiated an exchange program with the Canadian Football League where up to six

downfield NFL officials would work designated games in the CFL during June, July and August and certain CFL game officials would work designated NFL preseason games. The League also eliminated the replay video operator being a traveling member of each crew and regionalized this position. Finally, Jim Quirk retired as the Union's Executive Director in December, and Scott Green became an NFLRA employee as the new NFLRA Executive Director.

2017

2017 began with the resignation of President Jeff Triplette and Vice-President Tony Steratore being appointed as President. Carl Paganelli was also appointed as the Vice-President. His Board position was filled with the appointment of Fred Bryan. Executive Director Green proposed hiring Jilane Rodgers Petrie to help assist with the revamping of the NFLRA website and to improve communication with the membership and be more active in public relations. Jim Quirk was selected as the Annual Honoree and was honored at the Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, NV. Dean Blandino resigned his position as Senior VP for Officiating in May and Alberto Riveron was appointed as his replacement. Wayne Mackie retired to take a Supervisor position with the Officiating Department and his Board position was filled by the appointment of Bart Longson.

There were several months of discussion regarding the hiring of Full Time Game Officials (FTGO). Major issues of concern for the Union included; 1) that FTGOs would remain as members of the Union; 2) they would be adequately compensated; 3) no official would be compelled to become a FTGO; and 4) no full time officials should have any supervisory responsibility over any other officials. Agreement was reached when the NFLRA four points of concern were agreed upon, and 22 officials were hired as FTGOs for the 2017 season.

Rebecca Hudson, a long time NFL employee who interfaced with all the officials, resigned and was immediately recognized by the Union as a "Friend for Life." Toward the end of the year, several surveys were conducted of the membership as there were many concerns about the administrative practices of the office. Information was also collected to begin preparing for the new Collective Bargaining Agreement as discussions were to begin in 2018.

2018

The year began with President Steratore raising concerns about the grading system and the assigning of a limited number of officials to work multiple play-off games. The issue became a topic of concern in meetings with League officials. The Super Bowl was played in Minneapolis, MN, and the dinner sponsored by the NFLRA for the officials and their significant others was a success -- although the bus ride to the restaurant was alarming with the driver going the wrong

way down a one-way street! Dean Look was selected as the 2018 Annual Honoree, and he was honored at the well-attended NFLRA Annual Meeting in Orlando, FL. Walt Coleman IV was elected to serve on the Board and replaced Jeff Seeman. The Negotiating Committee and the NFL held three negotiating sessions over the summer and agreement was reached to continue the Full Time Game Officials Program for another year.

On the technology front, a new mobile application was developed by Julian Mapp with Bart Longson assisting and contained most all the information currently included in the annual directory. Also, the officials were notified by the League that their weekly game tickets would now be provided electronically, which raised concerns among the “technically challenged” officials. Administrative concerns continued to be a problem including missed payroll, uniforms and equipment delays and game assignment mistakes. Additionally, there were several fines imposed on officials, and the League took the unprecedented step of firing an official in mid-season. These actions triggered the filing of four separate Grievances. A survey of the membership was done to document the NFLRA concerns, and President Steratore and Executive Director Green traveled to New York to meet with Troy Vincent, Head of Football Operations, and his assistant Dawn Apointe to discuss these problems. Some positive results of the meeting would be achieved in 2019, and direct lines communication were established to avoid problems becoming bigger issues.

2019

As mentioned, following the meeting in New York, three grievances were resolved that involved individual officials and commitments were made to jointly work toward a new CBA before the end of 2019. The Super Bowl was held in Atlanta, GA and Ron Botchan was named the 2019 Annual Honoree. Ron was recognized at a well-attended Annual Meeting in Carlsbad, CA. The Negotiating Committee which included President Steratore, Vice-President Carl Paganelli, Board Member Bart Longson, Executive Director Scott Green, and Attorney Mike Arnold continued to meet with NFL representatives on a new CBA.

In meetings in July, the NFL made the announcement that they were cancelling the Full Time Officials Program for 2019 claiming it was not meeting its goals and was expensive. It was a surprise to the NFLRA as they had already hired 24 officials to participate. Criticism continued about the need to improve the training and evaluation system which was a major source of contention with the NFLRA. Unfortunately, League officials showed no interest in making the system fairer and more transparent.

However, in September 2019 negotiating efforts picked up speed and there were signs of interest for both the Union and the League to reach an agreement. After intense discussions, a final new CBA was presented to the membership in a special meeting in Chicago on September

28, 2019. Unfortunately, due to bad storms in the Chicago area, 17 officials were unable to attend the meeting. President Steratore, Executive Director Green and Attorney Mike Arnold presented the components of the new CBA which included pay and benefit increases and improved Grievance procedures. A new Succession Program was also included that provided enhanced Severance payments for officials who notified the League at least two years before their intended retirement date. Following a short question and answer discussion the membership voted their approval 102 – 3. The new CBA covers the period from 2019 to 2026. Additionally, in keeping with the tradition of recognizing those retired NFL officials who paved the way, the NFLRA negotiators adamantly insisted that pension increases totaling 6% over the duration of the CBA be included as one of the final items of the negotiation.

2020

Super Bowl LIV was played in Miami, FL on February 2, 2020 but it was to be the last normal NFL game played in 2020. Little did any of the officials know then that the COVID-19 pandemic would become the overwhelming force in 2020. Tim Millis was selected as the annual honoree, but for the first time in 15 years, there would be no Annual Meeting where he would be recognized. In the Spring, the NFL announced that Walt Anderson was now in charge of the Officiating Department and a total of five officials were either retiring or being terminated. Joe Larrew who had served for many years as the NFLRA Secretary was included in that group, and the Board voiced their opposition and recognized him for his dedicated service to the NFLRA. Walt Coleman IV was then appointed Secretary. Additionally, Fred Bryan resigned as Director and the Board appointed Eugene Hall and Ramon George to At-Large Director positions to fill the two open seats. The NFLRA filed grievances regarding the terminations of Steve Zimmer and Joe Larrew and a grievance was also filed when the League tried to institute once again a Full Time Game Officials program without negotiating the terms and requirements with the NFLRA.

During the Summer, all meetings with the NFL and the officials were done by way of Zoom calls as doubts continued as to whether there was even going to be a season. All efforts were focused on social distancing, wearing masks and lots of testing for infections. In August, it was determined that the season would go forward, and “protocols” became the operative word defining everything from travel, weekly testing and mask wearing on the field. Officials were given the option of “opting-out” of the season and five on-field, and two Replay Officials chose not to work. Also, in August the termination grievances were heard by the Commissioner, and after an excellent defense and presentation by long time NFLRA Legal Counsel, Mike Arnold, Steve Zimmer and Joe Larrew were reinstated with full back pay and benefits. At the same time, the NFL cancelled the Full Time Game Officials Program they arbitrarily established, thus avoiding another potential grievance loss.

To the credit of the NFL and the NFLRA, the 2020 season was carried out without missing a game. Numerous safety chances were instituted that included testing twice a week, spending a lot of time in hotel room, dressing at the hotel for the game and wearing masks on the field. Over the course of the season, 30 officials were infected with COVID and several others were placed on quarantine due to family members being infected – but all recovered and returned to work on the field. It was an unprecedented football season, and one that NFLRA members will never forget.

2021

The Super Bowl was played before the smallest crowd ever in Tampa due to COVID restrictions. It was also the first Super Bowl played before a “home crowd” with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers winning. For the crew, led by Carl Cheffers, it was a unique experience in which they did their pre-game meeting by Zoom calls, were basically restricted to their hotel rooms, and dressed at the hotel for the game. There was no Friday night celebration dinner with family and friends as all contact was basically restricted and in fact the Alternate Officials were in a completely different hotel.

Mark Baltz was selected as the Annual Honoree for his many years of service on the field and as long time NFLRA Board member. The Annual Meeting was again cancelled and the Mini-Clinic and Clinic, were again done via Zoom calls instead of in person.

Tony Steratore announced his retirement on May 5, and Carl Paganelli assumed the position of NFLRA President. Tony was thanked by many for his hard work and success as President with gratitude for his leadership in the 2019 CBA negotiations. Carl Cheffers also assumed the position of Vice-President.

A great deal of attention went into the Replay Officials CBA which terminated in May 2021. The NFL had paid little attention to negotiation requests and were playing hardball with limited financial improvements in comparison to the substantial increase in the role played by Replay Officials. During the Summer, there was hardly any movement in the negotiations and Replay Officials continued working without a new contract at the start of the season. With the support of the on-field officials and a continued push by President Paganelli and the Executive Committee a final CBA was agreed to in December.

A tragedy occurred in October with the death of Replay Official Carl Madsen due to a massive heart attack as he was heading home from his game assignment. Carl was also a former on-field official and loved by his fellow officials.

The season was again a grind due to COVID restrictions that still required testing and many last-minute replacements due to officials being temporarily sidelined due to the illness.

*** This was written to give the PFRA/NFLRA membership a sense of history, an understanding of where, when, and how the PFRA began, matured as the NFLRA, and hopefully will continue to flourish. These pages only attempt to convey to you the significant events that led to the founding and continued development of our association, the NFLRA. It cannot reflect in any way the dedication and passion each of the officials mentioned herein have given to your association. - Original Editor's Note (Dale Hamer)

Written & Compiled by Dale Hamer, Scott Green and Jeff Triplette

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