

HONORARY REFEREES

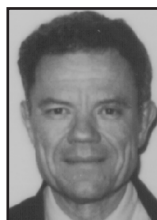
2016 State Finals



Michael Fontana



Larry Foster



John Polka



Tony Rainey

Michael Fontana's love of pole vaulting started as a student-athlete at Glenbrook South High School under the guidance of coach John Davis, and ultimately led him to college career at Iowa State University.

After college, Michael began selling track & field and gymnastics equipment to high schools and colleges throughout the Midwest. Despite his success, he missed the daily interaction with the athletes, so he volunteered to coach pole vault at Oak Park-River Forest High in 1996, which was followed by stints at Niles West and Wheaton Warrenville South. He coached a state pole vault qualifier in every season as an assistant coach.

Michael expanded his involvement with track & field by officiating the girls' pole vault at the IHSA state meet when it was contested for the first time in 2001. He continues that tradition today as the Head Pole Vault Judge.

Michael is recognized as a national expert in pole vault, having worked with the NFHS on national rules changes, as well as with the manufacturers of pole vault landing systems to help establish industry standards. He is a frequent speaker at officials clinics, coaches clinics, and pole vault camps. Michael has had a significant impact on the IHSA, high school track & field in Illinois, and the safety and evolution of the pole vault event.

A veteran high school teacher, coach and official, **Larry Foster** estimates that he has been a part of over 900 high school track & field meets throughout his storied career.

The long-time Jersey Community High School teacher in the Industrial Education Department has coached a variety of high school sports and levels in his time at the high school in Jerseyville. He made his greatest mark as the head coach of the girls' track & field team, as his tenure spanned 25 years until his

retirement in 2009. During his time leading the program, the Panthers had numerous state final qualifiers and a trio of state meet medalists.

Larry's time working the IHSA state final meets spans over four decades. He first began working the long jump event in 1985, thereafter, he has been with the discus event until all throws officials were eventually combined. He remains active today as a track & field official, as well as continuing to officiate cross country and volleyball at all levels.

The memories mean more to Coach Foster than receiving a check. He would like to encourage student-athletes and coaches to get involved with officiating. He said he was "astonished" to be selected as an Honorary Referee and calls it a "privilege to be included among an elite group."

John Polka has coached cross country and track & field at Fenwick High School in Oak Park since 1966. His time working at the IHSA state meet began in 1972, and he was selected to work as the Starter Referee for both state final meets from 1992-2001. For the past 10 years, he has served as the meet manager for both Spring Spectacular meets.

John first licensed as an IHSA track & field official in 1974, and he was selected to serve as one of the state's rule interpreters in 2000, one year before becoming an IHSA clinician.

John's distinguished career has included many prestigious honors, including induction into the Chicago Catholic League and the Illinois Track and Cross Country Coaches Association (ITCCCA) Halls of Fame. The ITCCCA has also honored him with its Coach of the Year and Official of the Year awards. John previously served on the IHSA Track & Field Advisory Committee and on the IHSA Officials Advisory Committee.

Earlier this year, Fenwick High school bestowed him with the Lumen Tranquillium Award, presented to

individuals who have built a life that is inspirational to young people. The IHSA also previously presented him with its Distinguished Service Award for individuals who have gone above and beyond to give back to young people in Illinois through IHSA sports and activities.

Tony Rainey is both an alum and Hall of Fame inductee of Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago. The Benedictine University alum spent the majority of his career at Luther South High School where he coached in nearly every capacity, from teacher to coach to principal to executive director.

His dedication to students has led to a bevy of awards, including district Athletic Director of the Year, and Coach of the Year honors in track & field, football and basketball. In 2015, Tony was inducted into the Illinois Track and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame, where his highlights include coaching the Braves boys' program to a trio IHSA state titles (1986, 1991, 1997), while the girls' track team also won state in 1986.

Tony volunteered on the IHSA Track & Field Advisory Committee and later on the IHSA Board of Directors. He has served for over 15 years as Awards Marshall for both Spring Spectacular state meets and is a member of the Appeals Committee. He continues to work as a track & field official, while spending his days as Athletic Director, Dean of Students and Physical Education/Health Instructor at Benjamin E. Mays Academy, a CPS elementary school in the Englewood Area.

Tony and his wife Vivian live in Chicago and have been married for 35 years. They are blessed with two daughters, Dionne and Anna, and enjoy their two active grandchildren, Gabriel and Caleb. Tony believes that, "regardless of athletic ability, any student can be successful in track & field."

All-Time Girls State Meet Honorary Referees

1978—Helen Riley, Charleston
2000—Ola Bundy, Bloomington
2001—Paula Coker, Mattoon
2001—Jane Davis, Chicago
2001—Dorothy Dawson, Chicago
2001—Mabel Holle, Lake Forest
2002—Pat McBride, Rockford
2002—Mary O'Brien, Elgin
2002—Barbara Richardson, Lansing
2002—Joan Schmidt, Niles, MI
2003—Leona Covert, Aurora
2003—Jill Ferree, Woodridge
2003—Madelyn Martino, Lansing

2003—Helen Marie Wallace, Chicago
2004—John Bailey, Jr., Shiloh
2004—David Daugherty, Mason City
2004—Genelle Samuelson, Rockford
2004—Mary Wersells, Chicago
2004—Stephen Weckstein, Scottsdale, AZ
2005—Phil Salzer, Peoria
2005—Louis V. Hencken, Charleston
2005—David Kidwell, Charleston
2006—Joyce Carlson, Lemont
2006—Gail Borton, West Frankfort
2006—Eugenia Krzyzanski, Chicago
2007—Geza Ehrentreu, Rockford

2007—Nancy Grant, Eastern Illinois University
2007—Tony Thorsen, Dwight
2008—Jim Effinger, Wheaton
2008—Paul Neakrase, Washington
2009—Lillian Spivey, Maywood
2009—Win Eggers, Chicago
2010—Jack Herschback, Chester
2010—Ernest Adkins, East St. Louis
2011—R. Bruce Weiman, Bowen
2011—Matthys Bax, Carmi
2012—Rose Effinger, Wheaton
2012—Owen Fuller, Marseilles

2013—Matt Piescinski, Charleston
2014—Keith Kittell, Chester
2014—Barb Kittell, Chester
2014—Kate Kittell, Paris
2015—Sandy Jenkins, Chicago
2015—Donna Campbell, Skokie
2015—Tom Gavin, Frankfort
2016—Michael Fontana, North Aurora
2016—Larry Foster, Jerseyville
2016—John Polka, River Forest
2016—Tony Rainey, Chicago