

Umpires Take Full Swing at Cancer

By Tom Schreck

When Illinois High School Association umpires Jeff Siegel and Bob Ciulla heard that fellow umpire and good friend Dave Pluda was having health troubles, they were concerned. When they heard the extent of it, they knew they had to do something.

"A fellow ump was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer," Siegel said. "He had to go through a series

yard closes down he'd lose his health insurance as well," Siegel said.

Siegel and Ciulla began to raise money for their friend and realized in the process that there is a good chance another official will have to go through what Pluda is experiencing. They felt it was a project that would have to become bigger than just a way to help one friend.

Siegel, Lake in the Hills, and Ciulla, Des Plaines, have formed the UMPS Strikes Out Cancer Foundation. Based in Barrington, Ill., the non-profit organization is dedicated to assisting amateur sports officials diagnosed with cancer or other serious illnesses. It was created in November 2011 and it has received a significant amount of contributions thus far.

"We drew more than 100 people to our first event in January," Siegel said. "We had a nice dinner, a silent auction and a 50/50 raffle. It was a great turnout and a huge success."

UMPS scheduled a second fundraiser for May 5. Meanwhile Pluda is bravely battling. He had continued to work early on in his illness but a heel infection brought on by complications related to chemotherapy has had him sidelined. A complicated series of skin grafts need to be done and the recovery time has been tough to estimate.

"The news isn't all bad, but it isn't all good," Pluda said. "I'm hoping to get back on the field this summer."

UMPS Strikes Out Cancer (www.umpstrikesoutcancer.org) is designed to help any amateur official regardless of their sport. The foundation will also consider helping an official with any debilitating illness.

"What these guys did has meant the world to me," Pluda says. "You don't realize how many lives you touch in your life until something like this happens."

Tom Schreck is a writer and a professional boxing judge with the World Boxing Association and the New York State Athletic Commission from Albany, N.Y. □

School Names Field After Late Soccer Referee

A middle school soccer field in San Jose, Calif., was named in March after longtime referee Bruno Stoerger. The late Stoerger refereed at Union for 30 years and was much beloved by parents, players and his fellow referees, according to Tom Dunlap, Los Gatos, Calif.

"He embraced all the good things we as referees strive for," says Dunlap. "(Stoerger) ensured that all players could have a safe, enjoyable game."

A tree has been planted and a plaque honoring Stoerger will be placed near the field. Stoerger died in March 2010 at the age of 76.

"This is an opportunity to remember a member of the referee community and the long relationship he had with Union Middle School," Dunlap said.

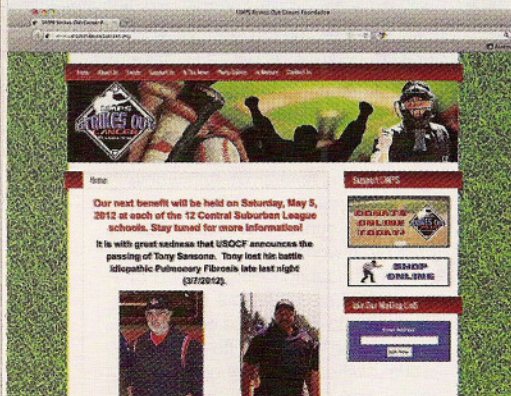
IAABO Scholarships Aid Summer Schoolers

The International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO) offers 15 partial scholarships through its Foundation Committee for officials attending one of six summer officiating schools conducted by the association. IAABO pays half of a school fee up to a maximum payout of \$175 for officials selected by the committee in a non-discriminatory manner.

Officials must meet a number of requirements set by IAABO in order to be eligible for a scholarship. That includes being a member in good standing, and local board dues and school fees must be paid in full.

The goal of IAABO's schools is "professional improvement." The desire to improve must always be present if one wants to achieve success as an official, according to the IAABO website, www.iaabo.org.

Tom Lopes, IAABO executive director and retired Division I basketball official, is director of the IAABO Officials' School. He is assisted by Peter Webb, IAABO coordinator of interpreters.



The UMPS Strikes Out Cancer Foundation began a website to assist cancer-stricken umpires with the high costs associated to fight the disease.

of hospitalizations, colonoscopies and rounds of chemo. It has been rough."

Pluda, Wheeling, Ill., originally went to the emergency room in July 2011 thinking he had a respiratory problem. Doctors found a growth in his colon the size of a baseball and he got the news no one wants. He remains hopeful, but he has a long way to go in his recovery and certainly a long time before he's back on the field.

Like so many facing debilitating illnesses, there was something else to worry about — how to pay for the medical care.

"He has no disability benefits and, unfortunately, because he works in the seasonal lumber business, there's always the chance that if the

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