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Longtime suburban youth sports official Thomas Toman dies at 77



Thomas Toman making a call while umpiring a youth baseball game.

Photo courtesy Lana Toman



Doug T. Graham

Thomas Toman is being remembered for his long career as a suburban gym teacher and his work officiating youth sports across northern Illinois for more than 40 years.

Toman, who lived at the Saddlebrook Farms retirement community in Grayslake, died Jan. 5. He was 77.

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He worked as a physical education teacher during an education career that spanned more than 50 years, including 22 years from 1975 to 1997 at Greenbriar School in Arlington Heights Elementary District 25.

Ron Sapochak, Toman's best friend and frequent officiating partner, said Toman was a natural around kids because he was a gym teacher, and officiating became a big part of his life.

"When you get into sports, it's addictive. You like the excitement and you like to be the one to make that call," Sapochak said. "It may not seem like it but you're performing when you're out there. It's kind of a rush. There's nothing like it."

Toman officiated football, basketball and baseball for youth athletes ranging from varsity high-schoolers down to fifth-graders. Sapochak said Toman's favorite sport was probably baseball, which is where he had the most success. In 1989, 1990 and 1992, Toman was asked to officiate the IHSA's state high school baseball championship game.

"That's a big honor because you're selected from officials from all over the state," Sapochak said. "He was one of the top guys that the assignment chairman called on."

Jon Corchin, the president of UMPS, a Northwest suburban umpiring organization, said he worked the 1989 state championship game with Toman, and described Toman as a great umpire. Corchin spoke highly of his reputation and character.

"I've never heard anyone say a negative word about him," Corchin said.

Sapochak said Toman ended his officiating career in May 2017.

"He maintained being a good official until the very end," Sapochak said. "Tom was one of a kind. He was my best friend, he had a heart of gold and would do anything for anybody."

Family and friends will celebrate Toman's life from 3 to 8 p.m. Friday at Saddlebrook Farm's Lake Lodge, 2601 Saddlebrook Drive in Grayslake.

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