

TOA "Special Edition"

Joe Schrag To Be Inducted Into the KSHSAA "Hall of Fame"

Many times induction into a "Hall of Fame" is merely an indication of perseverance. Certainly Joe Schrag has been a teacher, coach and administrator for a long time – since 1962. For example, as far as I can determine, he was the Athletic Director at Topeka West High School for 27 years before joining the staff at the Hummer Sports Park. He coached Track and Field at the school for who knows how many seasons. And, he has practiced what he preached – one source indicated that over the years he has run in at least 37 Marathons. I cannot imagine how many miles he has run – how many kids he has coached – and, how many principals he has outlasted! And, I don't think the KU relays could exist without his help!

In addition, I suspect that nearly every official who has worked an athletic event at Topeka West can attest to the fact that Joe Schrag is a consummate professional who cared deeply about kids, education, and excellence.

But, I am also privy to another side of Joe Schrag. Several years ago, after officiating a basketball game at West, one of my partners, Mike Hayes, and I were just relaxing and visiting in the coach's office that doubled as the dressing room for officials. After a few minutes, Joe came into the office – I think he was somewhat surprised that Mike and I were still there. We were happy to have Joe join us and after a few minutes of discussing basketball, the subject turned to our families.

It was then that we learned something that we had not known. He told us that his wife was very seriously ill and had been incapacitated for a number of years. Sadly, she was confined to a care facility. Joe related that he visited his wife every day and that he provided her with information about their kids and he tried to provide as much comfort as possible.

Mike and I certainly had not known this side of Joe's life and we were stunned at this revelation. Without thinking, I thought to myself what a burden he had undertaken. "How," I asked – mostly to myself, "can you muster the strength – the courage - to visit every day?" As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I couldn't believe how seemingly insensitive I had been.

But, Joe, ever the gentleman, had the perfect response. "I go to see her every day because I love her!"

Joe Schrag defines a "Person of Character" in so many ways. And, I am thankful for having the opportunity to share that moment with him! Joe's wife has since passed away, but those words have stuck with me for a long time. A "Person of Character" fits him perfectly! Probably even better than, "Hall of Famer!"

As officials, we must strive to be "Persons of Character!"

“A Person of Character” by Michael Josephson

Let's face it: It's not easy to become a person of character. It takes a good heart, but it also requires wisdom to know right from wrong and the discipline to do right even when it's costly, inconvenient, or difficult.

Becoming a person of character is a lifelong quest to be better.

A person of character values honesty and integrity and pays whatever price is needed to be worthy of trust, earning self-respect and the pride of family and friends.

A person of character plays fair even when others don't and values no achievement unless it is attained with honor.

A person of character has strong convictions, yet avoids self-righteousness.

A person of character believes in the inherent dignity of all people and treats everyone with respect, even those whose ideas and ideologies evoke strong disagreement.

A person of character deals with criticism constructively and is self-confident enough to take good advice, admit and learn from mistakes, feel and express genuine remorse, and apologize graciously.

A person of character knows what's important, sacrifices now for later, is in control of attitudes and actions, overcomes negative impulses, and makes the best of every situation.

A person of character willingly faces fears and tackles unpleasant tasks.

A person of character is consistently and self-consciously kind and empathetic, giving generously without concern for reward.

A person of character feels and expresses gratitude freely and frequently.

A person of character is not defeated by failure or dissuaded by disappointment.

A person of character seeks true happiness in living a life of purpose and meaning, placing a higher value on significance than success.

This is **Michael Josephson** reminding you that “Character Counts.”