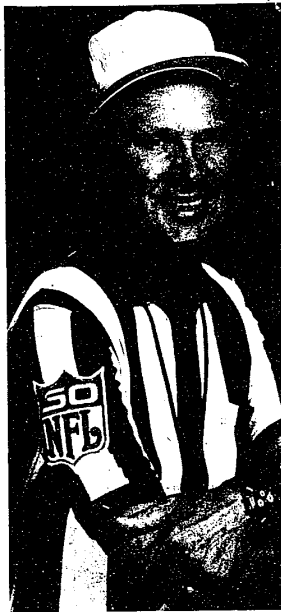




Tom Riordan
Executive Editor

Tony Skover: referee who deserves fame



W. Nick Kerbawy, Commissioner Michigan Sports Hall of Fame 1010 Joanne Court, Bloomfield Hills, Mich. 48013

Dear Nick:

If I'm not mistaken, nomination time for the Sports Hall of Fame has rolled around again. Has consideration ever been given to honoring an official in this august body?

May I propose a candidate? He's Anthony T. (Tony) Skover of Farmington Hills.

As you know, Tony is a retired National Football League and Big Ten official. He served 12 years with each organization, to climax 39 years of officiating.

I'm hoping, after you learn more about Tony, you'll recommend to the Hall of Fame board that Tony's name be given a place on the 1980 ballot.

I'D GUESS THAT no Detroit has so distinguished himself in the field of athletic officiating. One could say that Tony is a true champion.

Most sports fans know the vital role officials have played in preserving the integrity of the NFL. Never has there been a hint of impropriety.

Field officials of the NFL carry a proud tradition for knowing all the rules and applying them instantly and without favor. No greater example of this could be found than in the personage of Tony Skover.

Let me tell you a little about this man. He graduated from Northeastern High School as its top scholar/athlete — at age 15 — starring in football, basketball and baseball.

Tony was 17 in 1932 when he joined the University of Detroit's varsity football squad, coached by Gus Dorais. He also played basketball for the Titans, and when he graduated in 1936, Skover was given the school's scholar/athlete award.

Dorais steered Tony to a teaching and coaching job at U-D High School, where he taught French and math, coached baseball and assisted in football. His salary: \$1,200 annually.

TONY MARRIED his high school sweetheart and they had three sons.

In 1942, Tony left teaching to become a financial analyst for Fisher Body. In 1947, he moved to Ford Motor Co. at the invitation of L.D. Cruse, then executive vice president.

But Tony never left sports, turning to officiating in both football and basketball — first sandlot, then high school, small college, the Big 10 and then NFL.

An interesting twist in his business career came in 1956 when he was asked to join the Howard T. Keating Associates of Bloomfield Hills. Howard Keating had been one of Skover's athletes at U-D High, and Keating used to tell his coach, "Tony, some day we'll be in business together."

The eight-year association of Keating and Skover which developed was rewarding to both men.

As executive vice president, Skover was "a brilliant administrator, a financial genius," says Keating. Skover would take an idea and work out the financial end, and then Keating would sell it. They teamed on land development projects in Michigan, Florida and Puerto Rico.

IN 1963, SKOVER FORMED his own firm in the Livonia/Farmington Hills area. It now centers on the 375-homesite Meadowbrook Hills and Woods subdivisions, between Eight and Nine Mile roads, Newburgh Road and I-275.

In recent years, he gradually has been disengaging himself from the business, turning over responsibilities to son Phil, a resident of Northville.

Tony is an avid golfer, has played to a one-handicap. His long list of laurels on the links include six Meadowbrook Country Club championships.

Tony and his wife, Ruth, herself a fine athlete, now winter in Deerfield Beach, Fla., where they spend considerable time on the golf courses. Tony will go three rounds a week and practice two other days.

NICK, HERE ARE SOME of Tony's officiating stats:

During 39 years, he called more than 1,000 football games — pro, Big Ten, small college and high school. In one season, he officiated 50 contests.

As a basketball referee for 20 years, Tony in one season whistled 162 games (he kept a record book

then), including as many as six in a single day.

While in Big Ten football, Tony well recalls his first meeting with Woody Hayes. It came during an OSU game, and Woody was ragging Tony for a call. Tony glided up within earshot of Hayes and said, "Don't talk to me. You do the coaching, we'll do the officiating."

Hayes didn't say another word. Tony found himself asked to call two more OSU games that fall, including the Buckeyes' 13-7 Rose Bowl victory over Oregon State.

In pro ball, the climax came in 1974 when Tony was chosen to work as a field judge in the Super Bowl game in which Miami defeated Washington.

This topped 12 years of travel across the United States to NFL cities, memories of seeing truly great athletes perform and, yes, of being run down by a giant Denver tackle and finishing the game with a broken rib. ("I just had to stop breathing for a couple of periods.")

It also meant being in a crew with three other avid golfers and arriving for assignments in southern cities a day early so there could be golf on Saturday afternoons.

LIKE MILLIONS OF OTHERS Tony will be watching this Sunday's NFL championship battle between Pittsburgh and Los Angeles. Except that Tony won't be too concerned about what happens with the ball — he'll be watching the officials and judging how they perform. He admits that's the most fun for him.

Since his retirement five years ago from the NFL, he has attended one pro game and one college tilt. The hassle of the crowds is just too much. Tony says he prefers watching on TV.

And he has a ready answer for the people who feel instant replay cameras might well be the answer to possible missed calls by NFL officials. Tony says such a system isn't needed, and it would detract from the sport.

Here's hoping you and your fellow Hall of Fame officials feel that Tony Skover is a worthy candidate.

Sincerely,
Tom

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