

Historic girls volleyball officiating tandem is a “dream come true”

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Sarah and Ben Tanglao pose for a photo after officiating the Non-Public A final on Nov. 12, 2023 at Franklin HS.PJ Potter

By

- [PJ Potter | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

Memories are created at the NJSIAA state finals.

Records are annually rewritten in the ever-glowing volleyball books.

Tears of joy are shed amongst players, coaches, parents, and school administration as part of a day that is unforgettable and cherished for a lifetime.

On Nov. 12 at Franklin High School, it was not just the teams and student-athletes etching their stardom into the history of the sport. During the first match of Championship Sunday between Immaculate Heart and Paul VI for the Non-Public A state trophy, history extended itself to the last-remaining part of the game.

For the first time ever, a father and a daughter officiated a state championship contest.



Ben Tanglao looks on as the R1 in the NJSIAA Non-Public A finals on Nov. 12, 2023. John Jones

Ben Tanglao and Sarah Tanglao were the referees as the R1 and the R2 in the only matchup that went to an overtime third set in the 2023 finals.

IHA and Paul VI have met each other three times in a row in the NPA championship and featured every showdown resulting in a three-set affair. That calls for a tremendous amount of pressure for the officials, who were well-aware of the magnitude of the game - and the rivalry - unveiling in front of them.

This father-daughter tandem did not waiver. Their love and trust for one another only calmed them down to prevent the moment from growing too large.

“Sarah did a great job today. There is nothing I could say badly about her... in all facets of life. But she is an excellent referee who always works hard and strives to be fair. All of that showed today,” Ben Tanglao said.



Sarah Tanglao officiates as the R2 in the NPA finals on Nov. 12, 2023 at Franklin HS. John Jones

Sarah Tanglao, who has officiated volleyball for 16 years, continues to learn from her father. This duo has shared a court before at the collegiate level, but never-before in a high school state final.

Sarah, filled with jubilation and emotion, will never forget this match.

“It’s an absolute privilege to be out there with him. My father has been one of the top officials in the state for quite some time now. I’ve learned from the best,” Sarah Tanglao said.

Ben Tanglao has suited up as a referee for 21 years and never gets used to having the same partner by his side.

“It’s a dream come true,” Ben Tanglao said.

Normally, a father is filled with pride looking on as his child excels as an athlete competing for the victory. But, Ben views his daughter’s success and hard work just as equally as a player producing a career-best performance in the stat sheet.

His smile before praising Sarah said it all.

“Looking up and seeing my daughter on the other end of the court is something I will never get tired of. To officiate with her in this game was an amazing experience. I love her and I’m always cheering her on,” Ben Tanglao said.

“She’s always a joy to work with.”

The final day of the volleyball season cultivates moments that will be locked away forever in the memories of student-athletes, parents, and coaches.

But on Nov. 12, 2023, the Tanglao family added one more piece of history.



Ben and Sarah Tanglao pose with the full officiating crew and NJSIAA's Derryk Sellers following the NPA final on Nov. 12, 2023. John Jones

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