

NTID Instructor Becomes First Female Deaf Referee in NCAA Division I

January 28, 2003

An instructor from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology has become the first female deaf referee in the history of NCAA Division I.

Marsha Wetzel participated in the referee try-out camp for the Patriot and Atlantic 10 Women's Basketball Conferences over the summer and was added to the staff of both, said Renee Dorfman, coordinator of officials for the Patriot League.

"She's very crisp and very clear with her signals, she exhibits good judgment and consistent, fair application of the rules," said Marie Koch, coordinator of officials for Atlantic 10 Conference. "Her court awareness is excellent."

Both Koch and Dorfman said that Wetzel's being deaf has had no impact on her ability on the court.

"Marsha has certainly worked hard and has earned the right to be in a Division 1 game, simply based on her officiating ability, and nothing else," said Koch. "And she would be the first to tell you that she must continue to work hard to maintain her status."

"If a coach has a question for Marsha," said Dorfman, "she would be able to address the question with her partners, just as a hearing official would. She usually has a sign language interpreter on hand during the whole game; but if not, she and her colleagues write notes back and forth."

In addition to the Atlantic 10 and Patriot League conferences, she officiates at NCAA Division III games and high school contests.

Wetzel is an NTID instructor and Sports Assistant Program Coordinator at RIT where she works with RIT's 1,100 deaf and hard-of-hearing students and supports those who are involved in RIT's intercollegiate athletic and intramural programs.

Her responsibilities include teaching Wellness for Life and Wellness Activity classes to deaf students, including basketball officiating. Wetzel also hosts deaf awareness workshops to RIT intercollegiate athletic teams and its Center for Human Performance staff and student employees, and provides support to deaf and hard-of-hearing intramural teams and officials, and serves as student club advisor for RIT's Deaf Basketball Association.

"Marsha is an exemplary role model for all of our students at RIT," said Robert R. Davila, CEO of NTID and vice president at RIT. "She proves that education, hard work and commitment eliminate any obstacles people think they have toward realizing their dreams."

A skilled basketball player herself, Wetzel played at Gallaudet University, where she earned a B.S. in Recreation and Leisure Studies in 1985, and another B.S. degree in Physical Education in 1990. She then earned an M.S. degree in Athletic Administration in 1993 from Springfield College in Massachusetts, and another M.S. degree in Deaf Education in 1998 from Western Maryland College. She earned Coach of the Year Award after just one year of coaching girls varsity basketball at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C., from the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials. Wetzel also participated internationally in two Olympic-style Deaflympics.

The first and largest technological college in the world for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, NTID is one of eight colleges of RIT, and offers educational programs and access and support services to 1,100 students from around the world who study, live and socialize with 14,000 hearing students on campus. Web address: www.rit.edu/NTID.

To interview or watch Wetzel officiate at her next game, contact Karen E. Black, NTID media relations, at 585.475.6840 or at kebnmr@rit.edu. Koch and Dorfman are also available for interviews. Print quality photo available.

For more NTID news, visit www.rit.edu/ntid/newsroom.