

Krejci will receive major award from IGHSAU

Written by Jim Ecker

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Randy Krejci has stepped onto the court at the girls state basketball tournament many times during his career as one of the top referees in Iowa.

This year he'll walk proudly onto the court at the Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines to receive a prestigious award from the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union.

Krejci, 58, has been selected to receive the Jack North Commemorative Award for his lifetime contributions to girls athletics.

He will receive the award on Friday night, March 1 during halftime of the Class 3A championship game at the girls state basketball tournament.

Krejci has been a teacher, coach, school administrator, referee and state tournament director during his career in the Cedar Rapids Community School District. He retired as the principal at Harding Middle School after the 2011-12 school year, but continues to work in many capacities in high school athletics.

"The Jack North Commemorative Award is the highest honor the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union may confer on an individual," Mike Dick, the executive director of the IGHSAU, wrote in a letter to Krejci last week.

"It is presented to a distinguished citizen of statewide reputation and outstanding accomplishment, to suitably honor an individual who has contributed beyond that of any other person to the welfare, promotion and refinement of opportunity for high school girls to participate in competitive athletics."

Krejci is only the 14th person to win the award. Some of the previous honorees include Jack North, Larry Niemeyer, Jerry Wetzel, E. Wayne Cooley, Bob Smiley, Bob Scarpino, Jim Kelly, George Tracy and Joyce Bridger.

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"The names of the previous winners are pretty cool," said Krejci. "It's really nice for me. When I saw the names of the people who have won it, I went 'Holy Cow!'"

Krejci began his career as an educator in 1976 and worked at Roosevelt, McKinley, Harding, Taft, Washington and Kennedy in the Cedar Rapids school system.

He coached tennis and volleyball, served as the athletic director at Kennedy and still serves as commissioner of the Mississippi Valley Conference. He worked as a referee at 15 girls state basketball tournaments and 18 state volleyball tournaments and is the director of the state tennis tournaments.

He also works as a bench official at the girls state basketball tournament and plans to help at the state tournament again this year, wearing his referee's shirt to help administer the games. He plans to wear his striped shirt on March 1 before it's time to be honored.

"I suppose what will happen is I'll get out of my referee apparel and put on my suit and walk out there," he said.

Krejci's wife, Suzanne, and their two daughters, Liz and Hannah, have been invited to participate in the ceremony as well.

Krejci has received numerous major awards during his career. Among the top awards are:

- University of Northern Iowa Hall of Fame (1994)
- State of Iowa Volleyball Official Of The Year (1996-97)
- Kennedy Athletic Hall of Fame as an athlete (1997) and again as a coach (2009)
- Iowa High School Athletic Association Officials Hall of Fame (1998)
- Iowa Girls Coaches Association Basketball Officials Hall of Fame (2010)
- Iowa Tennis Association Hall of Fame (2011)

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Krejci spent 36 years as an educator in Cedar Rapids schools before taking early retirement last summer. He was the principal at Harding Middle School from 1998 to 2012.

"I really do miss the staff at Harding. I miss a lot of the kids," he said.

"Selfishly, I don't run by a bell or a clock anymore. I go to bed when I want to go to bed."