



Willard R. Schumack

Willard R. Schumack is widely acknowledged as a notable deaf umpire/referee in local, state, and national fast- and slow-pitch softball under the Amateur Softball Association and in regional and national Deaf Softball Association tournaments.

Willard was born near Aberdeen, South Dakota on July 4, 1942. He attended the South Dakota School for the Deaf where he was an all-around athlete in football, basketball, track, and cross-country running. After his graduation in 1963, he attended South Dakota State University. Later he went to a technical school for two years and graduated with a degree in printing. In 1965 he married Joanne

Marie McRoberts. They have four daughters and eight grandchildren.

Willard is very active in the deaf community, including the Sioux Falls Association for the Deaf and South Dakota Association for the Deaf, but playing sports was his niche. He played fast-pitch softball for 22 years; slow-pitch softball for four years and he participated in MAAD basketball and softball tournaments. In 1973 he was inducted to MAAD Hall of Fame.

In 1974 Willard began his career as an umpire/referee. He learned basic skills from well-known umpire Ken Czerny, an American Athletic Association of the Deaf Hall of Fame member. In the 80s and 90s, he officiated NCAA Women's Softball games at Augustana University, NAIA Women Softball games at the University of Sioux Falls, and umpired for the International Softball Congress Youth.

From 1999 – 2002, Willard was chosen to officiate at the North American Fast-Pitch Association World Series tournaments that featured 150 teams from the USA, Canada, New Zealand, and Japan. He was the only deaf official among the 55 umpires. He has umpired 22 national tournaments.

In 1992, Willard became the first deaf umpire in the United States to be indicated into ASA National Hall of Fame and his name is annually printed in the ASA Manual. He has earned the GOLD medal, highest national level of excellence in his work. He has also received honors from the ASA National Indicator Fraternity in 1992 and the USA Sports Federation Umpire Hall of Fame in 2000.

Willard still enjoys officiating at Sioux Falls leagues, MMD and National Softball Association for the Deaf tournaments.