



North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAGAAA Elects First Latino Commissioner in Its 43-Year History

John Deffee to Lead the Board of the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance

MILWAUKEE, WI (Sept. 24, 2020) — The North American Gay Athletic Alliance (NAGAAA) Board of Directors announces that John “Jay Jay” Deffee was recently was elected to the top position on the Board, following the resignation of Jeff Card in November of 2019. Deffee becomes the first Latino to serve as Commissioner in the 44-year history of NAGAAA and becomes only the 11th Commissioner to serve the organization.

Deffee, based in Phoenix, joined the NAGAAA Board of Directors in 2018 when he was appointed as Athletic Director. Originally from San Antonio, Deffee relocated to Phoenix, Arizona in 1995, and in 1997 was introduced to gay sports and athletics when he was asked to play on a softball team that would be competing in the Cactus Cities Softball League’s (CCSL) Saguaro Cup. Since that tournament, John has been involved with softball in many different roles — player, manager, league official, tournament director, international delegate and committee assistant chair prior to being appointed to the NAGAAA Board.

“I’ve watched Deffee grow into a strong leader over my tenure as Commissioner and take on more important roles in the organization,” said Chris Balton, former NAGAAA Commissioner and current NAGAAA Emeritus Council Member. “One of my favorite qualities that John possesses is his ability to bring everyone to the table and move the process forward. He continues to be a great asset for NAGAAA and in his new role an even stronger leader in the LGBTQ+ community.”

As a player, manager and coach, Deffee has amassed several titles in both A and B Divisions from his 16 NAGAAA Gay Softball World Series (GSWS) appearances. As a leader, Deffee served on the 2007 GSWS Host Committee in Phoenix. After completion of the GSWS, Deffee continued to lead in a new role as Commissioner of CCSL, which he held from 2007 to 2012, and again from 2016 to 2018.

Deffee, a NAGAAA Hall of Fame member since 2013, was recognized as Compete Magazine’s “Athlete of the Year” in 2009. A decade later, he was recognized as “Visionary Athlete of the Year” at the 2020 Annual Compete Sports Diversity Awards for his individual contributions to the sport of softball.

“This is a big milestone for NAGAAA and I am proud to be the one leading this organization,” said Deffee. “NAGAAA has a very diverse membership, but the

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organization's leadership has never really mirrored it," he continued. "NAGAAA continues to work hard toward building a pipeline of talent to appoint or elect leaders from diverse backgrounds to the NAGAAA Board and our Committee Chair positions. It only strengthens our diversity within NAGAAA and within the LGBTQ+ community."

Deffee spent his inaugural year as Commissioner dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and was able to lead the organization through cancellations of league play to local and regional tournament cancellations to eventually cancelling the largest LGBT week-long, single sport event, the NAGAAA Gay Softball World Series.

"As heartbreaking and unprecedented that it was, it was the right thing to do," said Deffee. "We had to make a call to postpone, cancel or move by May. This was a time when our major sponsors, like the NBA and MLB were all contemplating pulling out of sporting events or starting late/condensed seasons. We needed to do the right thing for the safety and health of our players."

It was the first time in NAGAAA's 43-year history that the GSWS was cancelled. The Board worked with the Columbus host committee to create a virtual GSWS that ran during the dates of the cancelled 2020 series. The Board and the host cities for Columbus-2020, Dallas-2021 and Minneapolis-2022 all agreed to slide by one year and host in 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively — which was no small feat to move hotels, venues, fields, etc.

"We have a great Board and fantastic partners within our host cities," said Deffee. I am proud of our leadership and the decisions we made to keep our community together this year, even without stepping on the softball field."

Off the field, Deffee has spent the past 13 years in both the public and private sectors of the transit industry — ranging from transit day-to-day operations, vehicle and software configurations, fleet operations, technical support, and hardware implementations for small/medium/large corporations and government bodies. Deffee's role on the NAGAAA Board is a volunteer position which he manages in addition to his full-time, professional career. Deffee currently resides in Phoenix, where he has lived for the past 23 years.

About NAGAAA

Formed in 1977, NAGAAA is a 501c3 international sports organization comprised of men and women dedicated to providing opportunity and access for the LGBTQ+ community to participate in organized softball competition in safe environments. Currently, more than 17,000 players from 46 cities across Canada and the United States participate in member leagues, and the best of these teams converge once a year for head-to-head competition at the annual Gay Softball World Series. For over four decades, NAGAAA has been a safe place for LGBTQ+ athletes to compete. Member cities compete in seven divisions — A, B, C, D, E, Masters C and Masters D.

*List of all NAGAAA's Commissioners
and NAGAAA press contacts on next page*



NAGAAA Commissioners:

David Kraemer (deceased), Los Angeles (1979 to 1980)

Warren Shepell, Toronto (1980 to 1982) - *NAGAAA's first elected Commissioner*

Bill Muldoon, Twin Cities (1982 to 1985)

Ron Burbey, Twin Cities (1985 to 1995)

Jim Marks, Atlanta (1995 to 1999)

Bill Sansom, Houston (1999 to 2003)

Robert Lon Berger, Atlanta (2003 to 2007)

Roy Melani, Portland (2007 to 2012)

Chris Balton, Memphis (2012 to 2019)

Jeff Card, Seattle (Jan. 2019 to Nov. 2019)

John Deffee, Phoenix (2019 to present)

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