

Dunnigan To Officiate In Shrine Bowl

Written by Mike Kelly

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Being an official isn't all that bad. Just ask Bobby Dunnigan, who during his career, has had the honor of working the Class 4A state championship game in 2000 (when Charlotte-Independance beat South View), and the Little League World Series in 1997.

He's also had the privilege of working five state semifinal football games. Well, Dunnigan, a Watauga County native, added another honor to his storied career when he was selected to be a field judge in the Shrine Bowl on Saturday at Gibbs Stadium at Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C. The contest will feature the best high school players from North Carolina and South Carolina. Eric Breitenstein, a red-shirt senior at Wofford College, who is a finalist for the Walter Payton Award, which goes to the best player in college football in the Football Championship Series, was the last Watauga County representative to appear in this game in 2007.

"I'm very excited," Dunnigan said. "The official booking agent informed me in the fall right before the season started."

Dunnigan will be one of seven officials working Saturday's game. Dunnigan worked most of the season as a back judge, who primarily works in the middle of the field about 25 yards from the line of scrimmage. Saturday, his new assignment will find him about 20 yards from the line of scrimmage on the home sideline.

His biggest responsibility will be to watch the wide receivers, making sure they don't hold when they block, and making sure they're on the goal line in case a player scores a touchdown. They also rule on pass interference plays, on fair catch interference plays, and they watch one of the uprights on field goal and extra point attempts.

Most crews are made up of five officials during the regular season. The Shrine Bowl will use seven officials. They are chosen from all over the state. The crew meets on Thursday, and will review what they've studied over the course of the season.

"We've had the mechanics to study for a month," Dunnigan said. "We've been studying our responsibilities and positioning. We'll apply what we've been reading together as a group and try to start getting comfortable with each other."

"I'm expecting very athletic players who have a lot of speed," Dunnigan said. "We have to anticipate the faster pace of the game and the faster players. They're faster than the typical high school team. They're similar to a college game and there are a lot of Division I athletes."

The Shrine Bowl begins at 1 p.m. on Saturday. This will be the 76th annual game. South Carolina leads the all-time series 41-30-4. North Carolina won last year's game, 26-19. Adrian Snow, currently the head coach at West Forsyth and led WHS from 2004-07, will be an offensive line coach for the North Carolina All-Stars Saturday.