

## **2025 Hall of Fame Inductee Ray Belfiore – Aurora**

Ray Belfiore began umpiring right out of high school and took the high school test in 1982. In those early years, he was closely associated with the group of umpires from Aurora directed by Mert and Dave Letofsky. As a new CHSBUA umpire, Ray worked a full schedule of high school games at the sub varsity level and during the summer he forged and sharpened his skills working games in a demanding crucible provided by The American Amateur Baseball Congress (AABC) in the Connie Mack (18+) and Stan Musial (Collegiate) classifications. Working Connie Mack and Stan Musial, allowed Ray work a lot more games with a lot of the same guys which allowed them to help each other get better. It was not long before Ray was recognized as a top newcomer and established himself as a trusted and competent professional eventually working multiple championships at both levels. Ray worked 30+ years in these leagues.

Ray's quest for improvement eventually led him to the Brinkman Professional Umpire School in 1987, an eye-opening experience for sure. He did not really know much when he went there, and they taught him what it takes, and the time required to be a great umpire. The stories that the big-league umpires told were great. When Ray returned to Denver, he was immediately tabbed to provide instructional assistance for the CHSBUA sponsored Mile High Advanced Umpire Clinic. None of our current instructors had a professional background and which Ray now could provide the group with current information and professional-level development. Ray was a wonderful resource for the clinic. He trained the students, but more importantly, he trained the instructors. Part of Ray's curriculum included his personal blueprint for success which was "Go out and work hard every game no matter what the game or the score is. Take time to listen to the veteran umpire and learn from what they tell you. You are always learning something during a game so take that information to make yourself better."

Soon, Ray was promoted into the collegiate ranks taking games in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (Division II) and several Division I baseball conferences including the Mountain West Conference, Western Athletic Conference, Big XII and West Coast Conference. As the years passed, Ray's demanding schedule would not allow him to accept many high school games for CHSBUA, but he remained a valuable instructor for all the years the UTEP/Mile High Advanced Umpire Clinic was in operation. All told, Ray worked at baseball at the high school and collegiate level for 40 years and retired with a list of impressive accomplishments to his name.

The Ray Belfiore file is unmatched by any other Colorado umpire. Among his many accolades are the following entries:

- 2 – Connie Mack World Series
- 2 – JUCO World Series
- 12 – Mountain West Championships
- 10 – Division I Regionals
- 2 – Division II Regionals

An alternate umpire for AAA baseball in the American Association (Zephyrs), PCL (Sky Sox) for over 15 years

Keith Bailey offers a personal insight into his sometimes misunderstood Big XII partner. "Ray was fearless. Some say he was brash or arrogant. But to know Ray, he took umpiring very seriously and expected nothing less from his crew. He had so much confidence in his ability, rule knowledge and field mechanics, that he had no equal. He was passionate about umpiring. Ray did not want to be good. He wanted to be the best. Ray was demanding of himself and his crewmates, always adding a spark both on and off the field. Keith recalls, "You knew if Ray was on your crew, you were going to have fun. But make no mistake, he would hold you accountable for your performance. Post-game discussions of situations and field mechanics were never ending with Ray always wanting to know how the crew could have done something better, gotten somewhere faster, found a better position or angle to get the play right."

It is no surprise that Ray was assigned the tough games. Coaches, players, and fellow umpires were always glad to see Ray take the lineup cards. It must be mentioned that Ray's influence did not end with the final out. Ray believed it was paramount to give back to the local umpiring community. He would share his rules and mechanics knowledge of umpiring to youth, high school and collegiate level umpires at umpire clinics, umpire camps, and the CHSBUA Area meetings. Ray assisted with more than 20 years of the CHSBUA Master Clinics as a mentor or Master Clinician. He was an umpire's umpire.