

NFL umpire Schuster 81 assigned to work football's biggest game - The Super Bowl!

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Fifteen years into his career as a National Football League (NFL) umpire, Bill Schuster has made it to the game's biggest stage.

Schuster, a 1981 graduate of Alfred University and former All-American end for the Saxons, has been tabbed to serve as the umpire for the officiating crew for Super Bowl XLIX. The game between the New England Patriots and Seattle Seahawks will be played Feb. 1 in Phoenix, AZ.

Schuster's football officiating career began shortly after he graduated from Alfred with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He was a four-year starter (1976-79) at offensive end at Alfred, catching a then school career-record 137 passes and earning All-American honors twice while under the tutelage of AU Hall of Fame coaches Alex Yunevich and Sam Sanders.

After graduation from Alfred, he worked three years as a financial aid director at the Stratford School of Business in Syracuse, also serving as an assistant coach at AU during the 1981, 1982, and 1983 seasons. In 1982, at the suggestion of a friend, Schuster decided to try his hand at officiating, beginning at the high school level.

Schuster steadily moved up the ranks of football officiating. He continued at the high school level through 1992. In 1988, he began working Division III college games as well, primarily Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Upstate New York contests. In 1992, he was promoted by the ECAC to officiate Division 1-AA games in the Yankee Conference (which consisted of the Patriot and Ivy leagues).

By then, Schuster had established himself as a talented umpire, the official who is responsible for the line of scrimmage: detecting holding and false start penalties and resetting the ball after each play.

Schuster's big break came in 1997, when he was chosen to officiate games for NFL Europe, which serves in part as a developmental league for potential future NFL players. It also serves as a proving ground for future NFL officials. In Europe, officials learn the rules of the National Football League and are scouted and graded by representatives of the NFL's director of football officials. The NFL has 17 officiating crews, so for Schuster to make it to the NFL, he had to be graded as one of the top 17 umpires.

In 1998, Schuster was appointed to officiate Division I games in the Big East Conference. He officiated for the Big

East for two years, while continuing to work NFL Europe games, which are played in the spring. In 2000, he got the job he'd been working toward for nearly 20 years: umpire on an NFL officiating crew.

Schuster is owner of Umpire Agency, an independent insurance agency in Lakeville, NY (Livingston County). He has served as an umpire in several playoff games, most recently in the NFC Divisional game between the Dallas Cowboys and Green Bay Packers on Jan. 11. His first playoff game experience came in a January 2003 NFC Wild Card game at Green Bay between the Packers and Atlanta Falcons. He was the alternate umpire for Super Bowl XLVI in 2012, between the Patriots and New York Giants.

Schuster will join Norm Schachter & 37 as the only AU alumni ever to officiate a Super Bowl. Schachter, an NFL official from 1954-76, was referee at three Super Bowls (I, V and X) and the first-ever NFL Monday Night Football game. Schachter was inducted into the AU Sports Hall of Fame in 1981.

Schuster was inducted into the Alfred University Sports Hall of Fame in 2003, joining his brother Bob, former AU quarterback and a 1991 AU Hall of Fame inductee.