



C A B O



A C A B

Post Play Express

Vol.6, No.4, December 2014



SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL!

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Submitted by Mike Homsy, Supervisor of Quebec

Dealing with coaches is arguably the most challenging part of the game as it pertains to officiating. Basketball is unique in that there are constant opportunities for coaches and referees to interact during the course of a game. Especially in a Crew of 3, those moments to communicate are increased, due to proximity. Communication can be beneficial, however. The degree of interaction will depend on the referee's level of experience, familiarity with the coach, and individual personality.

For a young official, it is not advisable to engage in too much conversation with a coach. It takes away his/her focus. Strong officials master this skill and manoeuvre through the rough waters more effectively. With more experience, an official can sort, filter and appropriately handle the situation.

Remember that coaches have a very different agenda than referees. Theirs is to win, ours is to allow the game to be played fairly according to the rules and make as many correct calls as possible. Somewhere along the way, there may be disagreements or clarity may be required on the decisions that are taken.

If there is to be any discussion, it should not occur during the following:

- Live ball
- Once free throw activity begins
- Start of time-out
- Start of half-time
- During warm-ups

To be effective, here are some tips to help through those tough times:

- Before you speak...Listen. Don't be quick to react. Communication is not only about talking.
- Answer appropriate questions only. Avoid the urge to respond to statements.
- Be approachable and responsive, but not a punching bag. The STOP SIGN must go up at some point.
- Don't try to win an argument.
- Don't be afraid to admit an error or to give the benefit of doubt.
- It's not only what you say, but how you say it. A childhood lesson!
- Treat coaches with RESPECT and expect the same.
- Treat coaches fairly, not necessarily the same. Don't penalize the calm coach on the first reaction when you have allowed the opposite coach to act crazy all game.
- Don't assume the coach wants an explanation, if they aren't talking to you.
- Don't initiate dialogue unless you are sending a message.
- Don't delay the game. Short and sweet!
- Don't ignore the coach. This can escalate frustration. A simple nod can suffice sometimes.

Developing the ability to effectively communicate is an art. For some officials, it is learned and for others, it is a natural gift. Either way, being an effective communicator can prevent many stressful situations.

ARE WE DOING OURSELVES A DISSERVICE AS OFFICIALS?

Submitted by Jamey Jennings, Supervisor of Newfoundland and Labrador

Recently, I worked a high school girls' basketball game in the first of many high school tournaments that will be held in the St. John's Metro region this basketball season. My partner and I did not do our due diligence before the game started. A few minutes into the first quarter, I noticed that one of the participants had a taped ear ring while playing. I stopped the game immediately and told the young lady that she had to leave the floor until the ear ring was removed. The player's coach, who also officiates at a higher level in Newfoundland, said: "She's been allowed to play with the ear ring in all weekend." My reply was to the coach: "You know I am not willing to take the chance on having a liability suit on my plate" or that of the Provincial Association.

Afterwards, I began to think - how many of my peers across the country put themselves at risk of a civil suit by allowing players to play while wearing accessories that are (a) illegal by rule, (b) endangering other players and potentially themselves and (c) as officials, placing themselves in a potentially litigious situation - one that, due to its nature of being foreseeable, increases the probability of being found liable if taken to court.

The section of the rule book that covers this is Rule 4.4 - Other Equipment. In it, Rule 4.4.2 states that players may not wear equipment (objects) that may cause injury to other participants. For girls high school play in particular, the officials must be aware of any ear rings or body piercing pieces where the object has the potential of leaving the owner and injuring a fellow participant or/ official, as well as hair pins, or bobby pins and barrettes, which are larger still. If any of these objects are seen by the official and not removed immediately, the officials are placing themselves in a situation where, if an injury occurs due to the illegal object, they could be held accountable in court for their negligence for not having the player leave the game until the illegal object is removed.

I have had coaches and parents say to me that "the ear ring cannot come out". My response has been the player is wearing an illegal piece of equipment that may endanger others, and as an official, will not allow the player to continue. I have had the player, coach and parents be upset with me over my decision, but I have slept better at night knowing I made the correct decision. Invariably it will come down to this and often does - if the child wants to play, and they do, they will find a way to get the object(s) removed and get back in the game. The game is much safer because of the actions taken.

We as officials **MUST** apply this consistently in each province. Last year in PPE, I wrote an article on accountability. Using common sense and applying this rule is another way of being accountable. We live in a society where due process is paramount. I would like to end this by asking one question: Would you actually plan to financially ruin yourself and your reputation by not being prudent? The answer is obvious. The relationship of this question to the above is this - if you knowingly allow a player to participate with illegal equipment and an injury occurs because of that, you will likely be held responsible.

ZEN AND THE BASKETBALL OFFICIAL

Submitted by Ted Montgomery, President of CABO

This article comes with a warning label. It will not, I believe, be something you've read before, might even contradict some of the orthodoxy you have heard before, and it will require you to be more than simply a passive reader. Before you read any further, I want you to take out a pen and paper or to open a new window and write down why you officiate basketball. Don't skip this step. Don't assume you know why, and just press on with reading. Take a couple of minutes right now and write – put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. It'll be important.

Okay, did you do it? Long list or very short? There's no right or wrong – it's your list after all, yours alone. Have you written this out before? Anybody notice if his/her list has changed since he/she started to ref? Any surprises? If you ignored the direction completely, you probably should not read further. You probably won't get it; however, you might think for a minute about an official who elects not to follow the guidelines/rules.

From the time we all started officiating, we've learned how to officiate. Learned the rules and how to apply them. Learned the mechanics and where to be, what to look at. Learned the signals and all the other ways to communicate. Learned to manage or facilitate the game. Even learned how to advance our career. Some officials are better than others at the application of rules. Some are great athletes and perform the mechanics superbly. Some are truly great communicators. The best officials are superior in all aspects of the how-to-officiate continuum – they've got the whole package.

A quick word about game management. At its core, it's really people management. It is convincing people that you are providing high quality service, the highest there is. That takes all the other learned officiating skills and techniques, coupled with a comprehensive situational awareness. You know what's going on and are able to control it, to facilitate resolution.

But this article is not about the how to officiate. It's about the why, and the importance of the why. Here comes the Zen-like part. If you focus exclusively on the how-to's, you block the freedom that is necessary to reach your natural potential. Compare this to hitting a baseball or golf ball. Yes, there are mechanics to be learned and mastered, but the "pure" hitters are not thinking mechanics when they are hitting. They are letting go. They are connecting with themselves in a way that is sometimes described as not getting in your own way. It is connecting with the why. Not why did you make that call, or why did you move to that position, but why are you at the game, why are you officiating. Are you getting what you want to get from the game? If not, why not? What can you do about it?

Do two pre-games: one, the usual with your partner(s) covering all the ways how you will officiate the game; the other, with yourself reviewing why you are there doing what you'll do. Get connected with some or all of the items on your list and you will be a better official – that game and every game. I am not suggesting you daydream or lose track of your game responsibilities. Quite the contrary, I am encouraging you, like the golfer or baseball pure swingers, to let your learning and natural abilities come out. No, you won't be the Jose Bautista or the Rory McIlroy of officiating, but you will be better. Better because you will officiate better when you feel better about it. You will feel better when you are getting what you want to get from the game.

Maybe you officiate for the camaraderie. Then in your self-pre-game, think about the friendships you are developing and nurturing. Maybe fitness is a goal. Think of your running and its physical benefit. “Hey, I’m getting a good run today.” Hockey goaltenders, NFL quarterbacks, even professionals in non-athletic endeavours talk about letting “the game” come to them, about being non-mechanical, and feeling connected.

What do you do then if the game is not giving you the fulfilment of why you officiate? This is not the same as getting the assignments you want - unless your only goal is to do select games. The best way to do better games is to do games better. Review why you referee and maybe you need to identify new or additional objectives. Referee not only to make your best calls, but to fulfil the reasons that underlie why you’re there.

This is not meant to diminish the importance of officiating the right way – getting the how’s right. It is not an either/or, but a context. Know why you are there and let yourself add that to your preparation, your performance, and your post-game assessment. You might even start to write an itemized list, not just for your season, but a particular tournament or game – not a what-I-hope-to-do list (although that too is a good idea), but a list of why you’re officiating, this weekend, this game.

In closing, for those who did not write their list, but read to the end, it’s not too late. For everyone, give it a try. I opened with a warning and will close with another. This is neither as simple nor as easy as it sounds. It takes a certain discipline and practice – again not unlike the golf and baseball swings. But it will improve your game as well as your satisfaction.