



Post Play Express

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NO REGRETS

Submitted by Wes Crymble, Supervisor of Manitoba

Over the last 30/40 years of officiating, I have met and become friends with countless number of different characters. When you first start officiating, your social circle includes high school/university friends, neighbours, work acquaintances, family, officiating friends, etc. The longer you officiate, the bigger portion of your social network is taken over by officiating friends. My wife, on occasion, has mentioned that I sometimes spend more time with my officiating family than I do with my own family. Eventually, some of these close friends leave for many different reasons - job, health, family changes, different interests, etc. Some stay involved with the basketball family by evaluating, mentoring or taking administrative roles. Some, however, you see only occasionally as spectators at games or the odd Friday night social gathering. Eventually, they are gone and no longer part of the basketball family.

The past year has been a tragic one for the Manitoba basketball officiating family. We have had the premature deaths of three of our former members. First, Ken Epp at age 59 passed away from cancer. Ken was one of the founding members of MABO, an assignor and our interpreter. Ken retired from basketball at age 45 due to ankle problems only two years after working the CIAU men's final in Halifax. From the time Ken was diagnosed with cancer to his passing was approximately one month. I was able to reconnect with Ken a few days prior to his passing for a brief 15-minute conversation. Second, Frank Searle, a long time member and MABO executive member, passed away suddenly from complications due to his diabetes. Last, Don Middleton, the founder of the Portage La Prairie Basketball Officials Association and a long time supporter of MABO, passed away due to heart problems.

With Dan and Frank, the first time anyone was aware that there was anything wrong was when we read their obituaries. At the announcement of all three deaths, there was a lot of disbelief and surprise. There was a lot of regret and many "If I had only known, I would have/could have visited or reconnected".

I am sure Manitoba officials are not unique in losing touch with former members, good friends who have moved away from officiating. Try connecting with some of these family members. Don't leave it too long so that you won't have any regrets.

VISUALIZATION AND MENTAL PRACTICE

Part 2

**Submitted by Bill Redden, Member GVBOA
and
Tim Heide, Supervisor of British Columbia**

Part 1 in last month's Post Play Express provided a description of visualization and mental practice and how these two exercises can aid in the learning and performance of the closed skills. Part 1 also described aims of reducing several psychological barriers and helping to develop trusted instincts. Part 2 deals with: A) how mental practice can assist in the learning and performance of selected open skills; B) research findings of studies dealing with the effect of mental practice on learning and performance; C) the portability advantage of mental practice and individual differences in visualization ability among people.

A. Open skills are complex in that they involve the official's thought processes of analysis and decision making before performing. Open skills are also unpredictable - officials must refer to a knowledge base to make a decision and there is no one fixed, stable total response as there is in closed skills. In order to recognize infractions, officials must have this strong knowledge base and the ability to match this information to game situations/plays.

One sequentially ordered method of improving infraction recognition is to:

- a) memorize and completely understand rule book language for all key words and phrases (e.g. , legal guarding position, cylinder, clear and immediate possession of the ball, pivot foot, unsportsmanlike behavior);
- b) visualize in mind's eye each of these concepts by seeing a demonstration by a player(s) in uniform so that the meaning of the concepts can be recalled by referring back to the visualized image(s). This is the "master copy" of the demonstrated concept;
- c) attend games as a spectator and make calls covertly from off-court. After a potential call is made or not made, create a short "why phrase" in rule book language describing your response on the "play". Visualize the game scenario that resulted in the "why phrase" as many times as necessary during the development of the "why phrase";
- d) during individual mental practice sessions create the same scenario(s) that you witnessed or develop your own game scenarios to provide mental practice in calling a specific play(s). In mental practice sessions, repeat each scenario as many times as required based on your infraction recognition strengths and weaknesses. Refer back to the "master copy" visualization image of key concepts if necessary at any time.
- e) introduce your infraction "stop clock" signal(s) with whistle (muted) as a physical response as early as possible in the process;

f) commit scenarios to paper for mental practice and review of situations that led to possible errors made in previously officiated games.

A similar mental practice approach can be used to learn and perform game management (coach and bench decorum) skills. Create coach and bench behavior scenarios from past game situations at any level of play. Use effective, proven official's responses to these situations to deal with game face-to-face consultations/conflicts with coaches in mental practice sessions. See the scenarios in the "minds eye" as they occurred - with coach's emotions included.

B. Research findings indicate that to improve learning and performance:

- a) physical practice is better than mental practice;
- b) physical practice combined with mental practice is better than physical practice alone;
- c) mental practice is better than no practice.

C. The advantage of mental practice is portability. Thus, other than in planned sessions in a quiet constant condition, mental practice can be conducted in many locations and conditions present in everyday life. Some people who use mental practice are able to focus well in busy environments by shutting out distractions from their mind's eye. There may be "down-times" when almost anyone can practice mentally. These occasions include waiting for services, traveling as a passenger by vehicle, and prior to sleeping.

There are individual differences among people with regard to visualization ability. The stronger the visualization ability, the more potentially effective mental practice will be in terms of learning and performing both closed and open officiating skills. Everyone can reach their individual visualization potential by participating in visualization training programs. These are available through the WWW.

A SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT

Submitted by Jim Walsh, CABO Past President

In the February edition of Post Play Express, Jim Cervo took us through the selection process for national championships. In keeping with the selection theme, I want us to give some thought to what I refer to as **A SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT**.

When I speak of a sense of entitlement many things spring to mind in the world of basketball officiating. Should selection to certain tournaments, or games, be as a result of an official's NOCP level? One's years of service? The number of games done in a given season or at a certain level?

Working officials frequently feel they have "earned" the plum assignment because of one or more of the above factors. Rarely do these same officials do a truthful self assessment and ask themselves the following questions: do I go to my games fully prepared from a rules and mechanics perspective? Have I been on top of my game in most of

my assignments? Is there another official or several officials who are performing better than me at that time? Am I truly the best candidate for the selection?

Assigners and evaluators also fall into the same traps. They frequently consider assigning based primarily, or only, on seniority regardless of the official's performance. They may assign based on the notion that s/he has earned their "swan song"; or the s/he has the higher rating or NOCP level; or s/he gives yeoman service to the association or league; "it's her/his turn"; or they have been around long enough so give them a try.

At many clinics that I have conducted, I advise the officials in attendance that they must control everything that they can control. That means, studying the rules and casebook thoroughly and frequently to ensure that the correct call and interpretation is always in the front of their minds; controlling their appearance from being fit to proper grooming to always having their uniform clean and pressed. It also means to give 100% effort in every game as the game deserves their best effort every time. It means to have complete control over their emotions and energy levels – get proper rest; avoid getting frustrated and/or angry because you had a bad day at work or home; or not performing at your best because you did not get the assignment that you felt you deserved.

Too often, officials do not do the necessary and consistent work required to bring them to the top so that the assigners will legitimately have them at the front of the line. They want rewards without earning them. They think "I am entitled" to the assignment for the wrong reasons.

Seniority alone should not entitle anyone to anything. A higher NOCP rating should not entitle anyone to anything by itself. Doing yeoman service should not entitle anyone to anything solely because you have done many, many games and stepped in whenever needed.

Reflect again on what Jim Cervo wrote: an appointment should be awarded to an official because he/she "qualifies" and that should be the only reason he/she "deserves" it. The student-athletes and coaches participating in these tournaments have worked hard, in most cases for many years, and are expecting to have the most qualified officials in their games.

How can you be the best you can be and deserving to be selected? Outstanding knowledge of rules and mechanics combined with appropriate preparation both physically and mentally set you up for success. Being physically fit and prepared to officiate must become a given. Proper rest must become part of your preparation. Learning from your past evaluations and immediately implementing suggestions to improve will enhance your chances. Always be open to learning from every game that you officiate and every evaluation you receive. Always be respectful to your evaluators and selectors.

Always be aware that, as an official, your conduct (both on the floor and at the tournament/game venues) is being observed and scrutinized. You are being watched by other officials, coaches, players and team supporters. You must present positively at all times.

You must learn from your disappointing experiences as to how you can reach the next level rather than refusing to accept that you did not deserve the plum assignment. This growth will be seen quickly by your evaluators. Negative

reactions will be heard loudly and distributed quickly to decision makers. When I started my law practice I was advised by a senior member of the bar that, if I did a good job for someone, they would tell someone else. However, if I did a bad job for someone, they would tell eleven others.

By incorporating many of the above notions into your officiating portfolio, you will have positioned yourself for selection. You will have made it the old fashioned way – you will have earned it!