

Topeka Officials Association

2009 – 2010 Pre-Season Basketball

One of the most important traits of good officials is the ability to trust our partners – and to be able to trust ourselves. There is no more uncomfortable feeling in officiating than wondering if those with whom you work a game are on the “same page.” Can you trust them to make the right call, for the right reason? Can you trust the administrators to do what is right for the game – instead of what they perceive to be right for “their team?”

How can officials demonstrate “trust?” 1) Know the Rules; 2) Know the correct Mechanics; 3) Have the best interests of the kids at heart; 4) Have the courage to do the right thing!! What follows the Michael Josephson commentary on Trust is a true story. I cannot help but wonder if what happened years ago would – or, could – happen today. From personal experience, I have my doubts... But, I still have hope!

Trust

Let’s face it: It’s not easy to become a person of character. It takes a good heart, **but it also requires wisdom to know right from wrong and the discipline to do right even when it’s costly, inconvenient, or difficult.**

Becoming a person of character is a lifelong quest to be better.

A person of character values honesty and integrity and pays whatever price is needed to be worthy of trust, earning self-respect and the pride of family and friends.

A person of character plays fair even when others don’t and values no achievement unless it is attained with honor.

A person of character has strong convictions, yet avoids self-righteousness.

A person of character believes in the inherent dignity of all people and treats everyone with respect, even those whose ideas and ideologies evoke strong disagreement.

A person of character deals with criticism constructively and is self-confident enough to take good advice, admit and learn from mistakes, feel and express genuine remorse, and apologize graciously.

A person of character knows what’s important, sacrifices now for later, is in control of attitudes and actions, overcomes negative impulses, and makes the best of every situation.

A person of character willingly faces fears and tackles unpleasant tasks.

A person of character is consistently and self-consciously kind and empathetic, giving generously without concern for reward.

A person of character feels and expresses gratitude freely and frequently.

A person of character is not defeated by failure or dissuaded by disappointment.

A person of character seeks true happiness in living a life of purpose and meaning, placing a higher value on significance than success.

This is Michael Josephson reminding you that Character Counts.

One of the most important ingredients in officiating is trust – being able to trust your partners – trust others who help administrate the game – trust yourself to perform well under pressure. The above is, of course, from my favorite author, Michael Josephson, founder of *Character Counts*. How we deal with – work with – other people is critical to success in officiating and success in life. We all have been in situations where the “truth hurts!” But it doesn't hurt as much as not living up to what is right.

My story this week reaches back more than a decade – all the way back to the SHIT (Shawnee Heights Invitational Tournament). How far back? All the way back to the first year that high schools had the 3-point line. I had been chosen, along with **Neal Bartley** to officiate the championship game between the host school, Shawnee Heights, and KC Schlagle. Neal, as many of you know, was a former assistant and head basketball coach at Hayden and still lives in the Topeka area. This game had all makings of a great game!

The championship game was a back-and-forth affair with each team taking the lead at various times. As the fourth quarter wound down Shawnee Heights was down by three. With just a few seconds to go in the game, I administered a throw-in from the junction of the baseline and the three-point line away from the table. The Heights kid threw the inbounds pass across the floor, towards the bench area. A team mate caught the ball – landed on the three point line and fired a shot at the basket as the buzzer sounded – swish!! Neal correctly signaled a 2-point shot and the visitors from Schlagle won the game. Neal and I got together for a few seconds – confirmed what he saw – confirmed his call and left the court.

The crowd, at least those there to cheer on Heights, was incensed – the 3-point line had just been implemented that season and many were sure that we had missed the call. The “*Capital-Journal*” reported that a crowd allegedly in the hundreds headed to the Shawnee Heights library to look at the tape of the last shot.

Here comes the point of the story: **Roger Toelkes**, Shawnee Heights AD, came into our locker room (I was a little nervous, to say the least) and told us that he had not gone to the library and it didn't matter to him what the outcome of the game was – he simply told us that he knew we had done the best job we could and that contracts would be in the mail the next week for the tournament the next season. Roger lived up to his word and that vote of trust was as meaningful to me and Neal as about anything that has happened in my officiating career!!

We need a lot more trusting administrators like Roger Toelkes! And, we need a lot more officials willing to make the tough calls – no matter the consequences!