

Topeka Officials Association

September, 2009 - Week 2

What it Takes to Be a Respected Official

Every once in a while **Referee** brings back "oldies but goodies!" The basic tenets expressed below are timeless – and, they are just as useful in every day life as in officiating. FS

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By George Demetriou

All officials, by nature of their position, garner respect to varying degrees simply by walking onto the field. Coaches and players are exposed to officials for relatively short periods and in limited circumstances. To gain the respect of his peers, though, an official must earn it. Here are suggestions to improve your reputation.

Support your partners. The only true friends an official has on the field are his crew mates. That trust cannot be violated. About 10 years ago, a local baseball umpire got embroiled in a dispute over whether an infield line drive was short-hopped or not. An undeserved double play was at stake and the original ruling was reversed. The umpire made the mistake of openly blaming his partner for not making the original call (not true). He has yet to live that down and many umpires do not want to work with him because they simply don't trust him.

Control your ego. All officials have an ego. A strong ego is necessary to survive as an official, but there are excesses. An official is better than he gets credit for, but still not as good as he thinks he is. Avoid publicity. Unless the local paper wants to do a human interest story, any attention given an official is bound to have negative consequences. Controversy is newsworthy. Making the right call game after game, season after season, is not.

Officials who are money-hungry or out for personal gain can be readily identified by fellow officials. Officials are smart enough to know when they are being used as a stepping stone.

Be honest. There is no excuse for lying. When you make a mistake, admit it. If you're not sure what you saw, say so. Everyone has made more than one call they wish they could have back. Learn from those errors and strive not to repeat them.

Respect others. Coaches and players deserve respect. Officials may not agree with the plays called. In a playoff game, a coach leading by seven points with five minutes remaining in the game called for a fake punt on fourth and two from deep in his own territory. His player was stopped short of the line-to-gain and the opponents easily scored a touchdown soon thereafter. The coach survived his gaffe when the opponent's try failed.

Keep a positive view. A negative attitude and constant complaining do not inspire others. A local official was once cautioned about scolding players who fouled and told "coaches don't like it." His reply, "All coaches are rectal openings." Officials cannot carry prejudice and that gentleman soon thereafter lost interest in officiating.

Get it right. It's great to look good and come up with right call. Decisiveness — the quick and correct call — is a wonderful attribute. It's better to look clumsy and get it right than to look sharp and get it wrong. You can sell a bad call until the film is reviewed. By NFHS rule (1-1-9) officials cannot use replay or other TV equipment to make any decisions, but anything else is fair game. Sometimes getting it right takes time.

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Topeka Officials Association

September, 2009 - Week 3

Start of the Seson? I wanted the above to be available at the start of the season and here we are at Week 3 - 1/3 of the season will be over at the end of the weekend!

Of course, it is important that we evaluate ourselves during and after each of our games - as individuals and as a crew. What could we have done better? How could we have helped the crew? How could we have helped the game?

Our crew would have to be classified as a “new” crew: Our R is new to that position; L is new to us; B is new to us. Only myself and Terry Keefer (H) are in the same positions we were last season.

Obviously, the first two weeks have been learning experience - noone does things exactly as I think they should be done. Not even me. We are still learning how our fellow officials think and react to certain situations. There are times when the simplest mechanics just don't get done - there are times when I have to smile when a newer official has a situation that that is called correctly under difficult circumstances. I try to have that same smile when a seemingly simple situation is botched beyond recognition.

The important thing to remember is the entity that we call a “crew.” Our “team.” Each member needs to take the responsibility of knowing what the rules are and how to enforce them. Each member needs to makae sure they know the proper mechanics, Then comes the art of know how to apply them for the good of the game - not necessarily “our” game, but, “the” game.

Experience is a key component - that is to say, “good” experience. Our B is a former Head Football Coach at a local high school. His insights into officiating are very enlighting - although, sometimes irritatingly humorous, as well. He has also been a basketball official for a number of years - that experience has been important to his new football assignment. Our L is new to Lawrence and to us. And our R is at that position for the first time as a varsity official.

My observation is that the veteran officials are more aware of helping each other - especially the officials new to us. Being truly alelrt is probably the key - it seems that as we mature as officials, we take for granted that everyone is going to do their officiating jobs every time - every play. And, we know that that is just not the case on every play. In the end, it is important that we work as a crew - help each other - help the players and help the game.

For our new crew the challenge is to listen - truly listen to the new members - help them without suffocating tem, remembering that a crew truly is a family, and that this is to be a positive educational experience! If you think I am preaching, Amen!! FS