

Topeka Officials Association

January, 2008 Basketball Newsletter

Here We Go Again: For the past couple of newsletters, the emphasis has been on the fact that the only character trait that we, as officials, can rely upon is our ethical behavior. Can we be trusted to do the right thing, at the right time, the right way? While we all should accept and be appreciative of constructive evaluation, none of us are immune from the kind of scrutiny that can ruin a career.

The latest example is a Big 10 football crew chief and his crew being scrutinized for their on-field calls and the off-field shenanigans of the Referee. They ended up being suspended for two games. From my own observations, I can attest to the kind of scrutiny that “Big Time” officials receive and the concern that can be created by that process. We all make mistakes, even the observers - it is how we react to those mistakes that dictates whether we will succeed at this avocation.

One of the issues surrounding co-curricular activities in school settings is that there is very little formal evaluation of the jobs we do. Most reactions from school officials centers around wins and losses - exactly the wrong way to about evaluating officials. Secondly, there are no set standards for performance and, quite frankly, many coaches would not know a solid officiating performance if they saw one.

How does the KSHSAA evaluate your performance for post-season play? By the number of votes you get from the coaches - the most prejudiced group involved in our activities. Here is some good news, however: I am pretty sure Fran has observed more games in her tenure than we can imagine.

Let's hope that by the time a new issue of the **Newsletter** is published, there are no more scandels in the officiating world.

Mechanics: I continue to be appalled by the lack of attention to proper officiating mechanics, While the example i am about to give you is a rare case indeed (I hope), we need to understand that the prescribed mechanics are meant to give us the best opportunity possible to get the “open look” on all plays. Why would we not work to do just that?

I would not have believed this had I not seen it with my own eyes: Varsity boys game - the officials are transitioning to the other end of the floor and one official is known for only wanting to work at “C.” This official was at L, transitioning to T - however, this is how it happened: The C official (across from the table) ran all the way to the new L and never stopped until he got across the floor to L on table side - the old L official (table side) took a 45 degree angle across the floor to become C (across from the table) - the old T (table side) became the new T (table side). I cannot make this stuff up. All of us who work varsity ball have the responsibility to do things right.

Working T: Remember, if a drive to the basket begins from the side where T and L are, T has the primary responsibility for the foul call. The best look comes from taking a step or two down towards the goal and perhaps a step or two out onto the

floor to get the Open Look! And, as a reminder, when setting up, T should settle a step or two above the 3-point arc - not a step or two beyond the half-court line.

Working C: I have observed, both in person and on television, C officials who working almost as far down as the baseline! Why? Who is teaching that mechanic? If play requires, L needs to flex across the lane, putting C to T! And, don't forget that C can force that switch by moving to T.

Working L: I see too many officials working at the juncture of the end line and the free throw lane on rebounds. You need to be at that position to effectively switch to the other side of the lane. But, once the shot goes up, back out at about a 45 degree angle for a few steps. This "opens up" your view of the rebounders in the lane.

If Fran were to judge officials by their mechanics only, I don't think we would have very many officials qualify for post-season!

Pre-Game Conferences: Pre-Game Conferences are essential to working a game properly. Review game issues - review mechanics - review rules.

I have attended 12 years worth of Big 12 football pre-game conferences - many if them more than two hours in length. I have seen these crews watch endless hours of video.

I have attended, off and on, more than 20 years of Big and Big 12 basketball pre-game conferences on the women's side.

Why do these top officials from all across America participate in these meetings? Because they want to do the best job possible - in many cases, their livelihoods depend on their ability to make correct calls - the integrity of the game depends on the integrity of the officials!

If it Looks Bad... i have noticed several officials who lean in a direction and "crane" their necks to ostensibly get a better look at a play. Here is a much better solution: Move your feet to get the open look!

Best Wishes for Prosperous and Peaceful New Year! FS