

Prologue to a New Season Football 2007

This is the time of year that gets our attention for those who officiate at the high school level. After a summer break from what we love to do, the promise of an upcoming new school year brings great expectations for many of us. Sure, there were summer camps and competitions to be officiated, but the semi-sanity of “school ball” is something so many of us look forward to – school competition is supposed to be co-curricular in nature – activities that teach both skills and **values** that cannot be taught in a “regular” classroom.

A new school year also brings with it an issue that has long plagued KSHSAA officials. This issue is the issue of “blackballing” officials by schools and/or leagues. At a recent meeting I had with KSHSAA Executive Director Gary Musselman, we discussed this issue – we both agreed with the stance of a KSHSAA “Officials Committee” that “blackballing” officials by schools and/or leagues is not to be allowed (this committee was originally to have a life span of a year – instead, it had a life span of three years). The problem is this: There are no provisions for the KSHSAA to rectify a situation when “blackballing” officials takes place. Mr. Musselman, however, wrote the following to me: “While I have no assurance the KSHSAA can ever adopt a blackball policy with teeth, I do commit to you we will begin a discussion of how to improve the situation among leagues and our member schools through measures that are appropriate.” Just making schools, leagues, and commissioners aware of this issue is a step in the right direction.

Now is a Good Time to Recruit: It should be painfully obvious to all of us that we need to do a better job of recruiting new officials. As I have often mentioned, it used to be that about half of the registered football officials were on “Friday night varsity crews,” while the other half was not. Now, it has become more and more difficult to find even one replacement on a Friday night. We need to recruit – people in their 20’s and 30’s – people in their 40’s and 50’s. We need to recruit people who realize the importance of co-curricular activities – people who love the game they are officiating. Think about those you know who might “fit the bill.”

Also, getting equipped for football officiating can get expensive – donate uniforms – shoes, etc. to your local association (I think I could outfit an entire crew with what I have!!).

Work Hard at Learning the Rules and the Mechanics: Whether you have been officiating for a few decades or a few years, work at getting full knowledge of the rules and the mechanics. At a recent football Rules Meeting I attended, there were a couple of “ah-has!” Get started now!

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