

TOA “Football Newsletter”

Wrap-Up Edition

Last Thursday evening I watched with interest the television reports from the many games played at the 4A level and below in the area. That was after I watched a tremendous game at Perry-Lecompton HS as they finally were defeated by Atchison, 25-20. As you may remember, the weather was lousy with a cold, hard mist accompanied by a strong north wind. Perhaps a better way to describe the weather was, “miserable.” For many crews, this was the first time they had to break out the foul weather gear.

If you, or any members of your crew, wear “jackets,” THROW THEM AWAY! Perhaps no other piece of officiating equipment ever designed made officials look worse! Why? None of them look even close to the same – the black stripes fade, the white stripes yellow, the bottom bands are always different, and, perhaps more importantly, they don’t keep you dry or warm. I only bought one of those jackets – in 1972 – and it is still hanging in my garage for use when I am mowing the lawn in the Spring! You will find that layers of clothing go a lot further to keep you a lot warmer. And, you will look a lot more professional. Or, you can look like a striped balloon wafting around the field!!

Watching the news reports, I saw way too many hats that were NOT fitted hats. For crying out loud, fitted hats now cost the same as adjustable hats. If you are still wearing an adjustable hat, THROW IT AWAY!! Please!!!

Mechanics: I saw way too many officials on the sideline have a play go out of bounds – and they stood there staring at the “spot” while the players were out of bounds unattended. Learn the proper mechanics and use them. THROW YOUR OLD HABITS AWAY!!

If you don’t know what you look like on the field, borrow a tape from a coach – it is very important that you “look the part.” It is very important that your first impression is a good one.

Some Final Thoughts: In a 2002 edition of the KSHSAA *Journal*, a Guest Editorial deals with the traits of a good Team Captain. Many of the ideas expressed are very much in tune with the material I have often shared from *Character Counts!*, a program developed by Michael Josephson. Here are some traits the article brought to light as characteristics (note the “root” word, character) of leaders – of, hopefully, officials. These characteristics are a definition of excellence in officials:

Passion: There must be a real passion for serving the best interests of the game, the kids, co-curricular activities, and getting better every time you step on the field or court;

Trustworthiness: Can the kids, the coaches, and your partners depend on you to put forth your very best effort – can they trust you to do your job in your area – can they trust you to be there when they need help?

Knowledge: Do you know, really know, the rules and the mechanics. We can all learn from the “books,” but can we translate that learning to the field or court. Do you have comprehensive pre-game conferences? Do you participate or do you let someone else on the crew do all the leading? Everyone on the crew can contribute, and should do so.

Honesty: Do you make every call an “honest” one? Your arrival at the stadium is the time to put away any feelings, positive or negative, about any school, any player, or any coach. Over the years, I have had many favorite coaches, AD’s, etc. I have also had plenty of folks I am glad were not the coaches of my kids. **Having favorites is OK – playing favorites is a sure sign of being dishonest.** You’re paid to administer a game – and to make sure you provide a safe and **fair** environment for that game. Our job is to make the correct calls, no matter the real or perceived consequences.

Listening: Far more has been gained by officials who listen than officials who talk. Listening is a two-way street and is a key to effective officiating. Make sure you make the effort to listen and understand a coach who is acting in a reasonable manner. And, make sure that coaches know that you **cannot** hear when they are yelling, just to be yelling.

Flexibility: No two games are alike – no partners are alike – no courts or fields are exactly alike. Have the flexibility that it takes to understand what is going on in a game. Also have the flexibility to embrace new rules and new mechanics. This old adage is just a true in officiating as in “real” life: “Change or Die!”

I hope these epistles have been helpful. Stay Healthy!! FS