

# VOLLEYBALL



**2011**

**RULE CHANGE:**

## Net Sleeve Promotes School Spirit

The most visible rule change made by the NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee for the 2011-12 school year deals with net specifications. The NFHS is now allowing a net sleeve on the top of the net to include the school name, insignia, school mascot and/or advertising placed along the sleeve by way of a decal or professional printing.

"The committee recognized the need for this change as the use of collegiate facilities by high school teams has increased," said Becky Oakes, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Volleyball Rules Committee. "Also, the net sleeve will allow teams to promote school spirit and have another option for revenue."

Under the new Rule 3-1-1, there may now be a white net sleeve, no wider than 3-3/8 inches, covering the top net tape. That sleeve, so long as it does not affect the height of the net, makes legal the various equipment being played on by high schools when in some college facilities. Some feel that permitting the use of the school name/mascot or logo on the top of the net enhances school spirit. If choosing to place advertising on the net, a school has another source for revenue. Also, the use of a manufactured sleeve allows the school to place its name or logo on the net without the expense of a custom net.

Coaches and state association representatives who responded to an NFHS questionnaire last year were in favor of the change (56 percent to 44 percent).



A white net sleeve, no wider than 3-3/8 inches, like the one in the photo from a college match, may be installed along the top of the net and shall be secured so it does not affect the net height or interfere with play. It can include a school name, insignia, school mascot and/or advertising.

**Play 1:** Prior to the match while inspecting the equipment, the first referee notices that the white net sleeve has the name of a local restaurant and school mascot printed along the top.

**Ruling 1:** Legal. The sleeve, so long as it does not affect the height of the net or interfere with play, may have the school name, insignia, school mascot and/or advertising placed along the top by way of a decal or professional printing.

**Play 2:** As part of her prematch responsibilities prior to a high school

match in a collegiate facility, the first referee sees that the net length is slightly longer than the net length in a high school facility. **Ruling 2:** Legal. As long as the net is within 31 feet, six inches (9.5 meters) to 33 feet (10 meters) in length when stretched, it is legal.

Changes to the same rule now provide a range for overall width and length of the net to accommodate both the standard measurements and metric measurements for high school and use of collegiate facilities. □



# Playable, Nonplayable Areas Defined

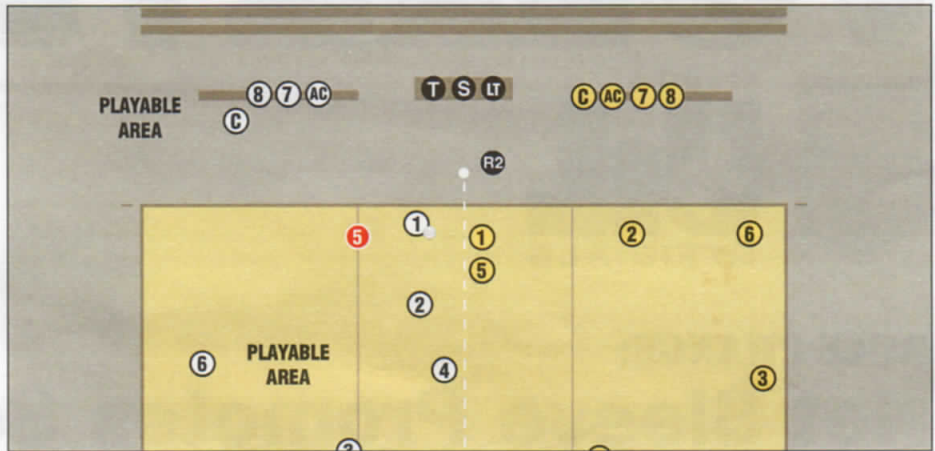
Rule 2-1 has been expanded by two articles to better define playable and nonplayable areas, which had not been clearly defined in the past.

“The committee examined the way play is conducted from gymnasium to gymnasium and wanted to provide the definitions for consistency and fairness in play from facility to facility,” said Becky Oakes, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Volleyball Rules Committee.

Article 9 states that the playable area for competition includes the court and the unobstructed space outside of the court boundary lines. The playable area outside of the court boundary lines must be visible to all team members and officials.

Article 10 covers the nonplayable area or the space located beyond the court and surrounding playable area, including walls, bleachers, anything part of or behind team benches, and any other areas the first referee identifies during the prematch conference as unsuitable for play.

**Play 1:** A player from Team A: (a) goes between the scorer’s table and Team A’s bench to make the second contact on the ball; (b) makes a save while sitting on the scorer’s table with no contact with the floor or any playable area on his/her side of the net; (c) saves



a ball with one foot in a playable area and one foot in a nonplayable area; (d) moves a curtain divider that is more than six feet from the court to play the ball. **Ruling 1:** (a) and (c) are legal, (b) and (d) are illegal. Players may play a ball over a non-playable area at the time the ball is contacted, provided the player is in contact with the playable area. A player may enter a nonplayable area after playing a ball. The referees should address the curtain and whether or not the space between the team benches and scorer’s table is playable area when reviewing the ground rules in the prematch conference with coaches and

captains.

**Play 2:** A screen that separates two courts hangs from the ceiling to the floor, four feet from the sideline of each court. In (a), the RB for Team S holds the screen back while the RF makes a play; (b) the ball hits the screen while RF is getting under the ball to play it. **Ruling 2:** (a) and (b), the first referee shall stop play and call a replay. A full ceiling-to-floor screen is not considered an obstruction hanging from the ceiling, but a temporary wall and in this case only four feet from the court. The first referee discerned the ball was playable had the screen not been there. □

## RULE CHANGE:

# Clarification on Playing Shorthanded

The Volleyball Rules Committee expanded Rule 1-3 to further explain the scoring protocol for a team playing with fewer than six players due to injury, illness or disqualification after the start of a match. The new article 3 states that a loss of rally/point is awarded each time a vacant position rotates to serve in the

right back position.

The rule addition helps clarify Rule 6-2-2, which states, “If a team has fewer than six eligible players due to illness, injury or disqualification after the start of a match, it shall continue to play.” It also adds Rule 8-1-4, which states “For teams with fewer than six players, each time

a vacant position rotates to serve in the right back position, a loss of rally/point is awarded to the opponent.”

**Play 1:** Team A has only six eligible players. After the start of the match, the left front player, No. 10, becomes ill/injured and must leave the match when: (a) the team now has two players in the front row and the vacant spot for No. 10 is now open, the left back player moves to the left front and attacks the ball higher than the top of the net and in front of the attack line; (b) the team rotates so that No. 10 should be serving, is a vacant position, ▶



► a loss of rally and a point recorded for opponent; (c) a player who was not on the roster comes late to the match and is allowed to re-place the vacant position for the ill/injured player. **Ruling 1:** In (a), illegal attack; (b) correct procedure; (c) point/loss of rally, the player may enter the set after he/she is added to the roster.

**Play 2:** Team A's No. 5 suffers a concussion during set two of a match and cannot return. Team A has three players on the bench, but they have already played in the set in other positions. The coach chooses to play with five players by not replacing No. 5 and accept a loss of rally/point each time this vacant position

rotates to the RB position. **Ruling 2:** Illegal procedure. Exceptional substitution must be made. Exceptional substitution allows No. 5 to be replaced by any of the three players on the bench. The coach does not have a choice to play shorthanded when players are still available (Rule 10). □

## Study: Girls' Volleyball Has Low Injury Rate

The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and the NFHS Sports Rules Committees use information from the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO™) to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO™ is in its 6th year of collecting sports exposure and injury data.

High School RIO™ data shows that girls' volleyball has one of the lowest injury rates of the 20 sports under surveillance. Additionally, girls' volleyball injury rates have dropped significantly over the past five years. Unlike most of the other 20 sports, girls' volleyball has consistently had practice injury rates that

were nearly as high as competition injury rates. Ankle sprains/strains are by far the most common injury in volleyball and a majority of ankle injuries occur at the net (82.9%). Understanding such patterns of injury is one important tool for the Volleyball Rules Committee to use when considering a new rule change and keeping risk minimization as a priority.

Unfortunately, much less is known about rates and patterns of injury in boys' volleyball due to the very small numbers of schools with boys' volleyball participating in High School RIO™. If you are interested in more information on the High School RIO™ Study or interested in becoming a reporter for boys' and /



or girls' volleyball, please visit <http://injuryresearch.net/rioreports.aspx> for summary reports or send an email to: [highschoolrio@nationwidechildrens.org](mailto:highschoolrio@nationwidechildrens.org). □

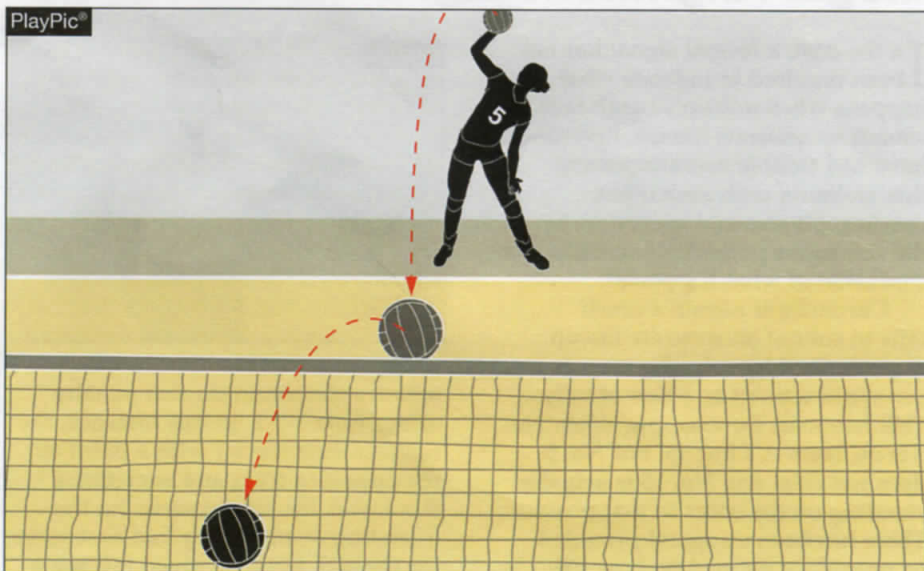
### RULE CHANGE:

## Definition of a Serve Expanded

The Volleyball Rules Committee added to Rule 8-1-1, expanding the definition of a serve, with a sentence that states, "A serve contacting and crossing the net shall remain in play provided that the ball is entirely within the net antennas."

Previously, the rules book had no definition of that type of serve and it was assumed legal by a reference to a "let" serve in Rule 1-2-2. With the expanded definition of the serve, the rules committee eliminated Rule 1-2-2 as it is no longer needed.

**Play:** Player No. 7 is serving and contacts the ball so that it strikes the top of the net and brushes the net antenna at the same time before landing on the line on the other side of the net. **Ruling:** Illegal serve; loss of rally/point because the ball, even though crossing the net, contacted the net antenna. □





## RULE CHANGE:

# Additional Choice for Hair Control

Players can now add flat barrettes, unadorned and no longer than two inches, to the list of hair control devices that can be legally worn during a match. Rule 4-1-5 already allows for unadorned bobby pins and flat clips, no longer than two inches, to be worn. Hair adornments made of soft material and no more than two inches wide may also be worn.

The Volleyball Rules Committee feels the rule change gives players more choices to keep hair out of their face and poses no safety problem.

**Play 1:** Each member of the team has commercially manufactured flat barrettes with a small head of the school's mascot "Tigers" permanently attached to the barrette. **Ruling 1:** Those barrettes are illegal equipment and shall not be worn.

**Play 2:** During a rally, a flat barrette falls from A3's hair onto the floor. Since it is not immediately dangerous, the referees allow the rally to continue.

**Ruling 2:** Correct procedure. There is seldom a need to immediately stop the playing action.

If it becomes a more frequent occurrence, an unnecessary delay should be called. □



## Illegal Alignment Signal Now Used for Inaccurate Lineup

In the past, a formal signal has not been required to indicate what happens when a team's coach fails to submit an accurate lineup. Referees have had trouble communicating this violation with each other, coaches, players and spectators as the set begins potentially under some confusion of what happened.

Currently, if a team's coach fails to submit an accurate lineup as prescribed by rule, the team is penalized a point and loss of rally. This happens, for example, when No. 5 is on Team A's lineup, but No. 5 does not exist and No. 15 is actually standing on the court in that position. There has been no signal provided or procedure defined on how the



referees communicate that penalty under Rule 7-1-2. In this instance, the referees start the set with a point to the opposing team and sometimes this forces the loss of serve for the offending team (if they had first serve for the set). Most involved just see a

point go on the scoreboard to start the set and may see the opposing team rotate if they will now serve. It often raises some confusion among participants.

The second referee will explain the penalty and what happened to each team's coach, but spectators are often left wondering what occurred. In addition, the first referee is often left wondering what he/she should do to indicate the infraction and that a penalty has occurred. Now, the second referee will communicate, as necessary, to the coaches/players and then **signal illegal alignment (Official Signal #1)** on the offending team with a point resulting for the opponents. □



**RULE CHANGE:****Second Referee Duties Enhanced**

As has always been the case, the second referee checks the scoresheet for accuracy during each time-out and at the end of each set. In the past, the first referee was to wait for the second referee to initial the scoresheet and indicate the end of set signal before releasing teams from the end line. This sequence has been slightly changed to create a more efficient process for all participants.

The second referee will continue to check the accuracy of the scoresheet during each time-out and at the end of the set. It has always been a responsibility of the scorer to notify the second referee when a team reaches set point. The second referee responsibilities now

include something that was recommended previously. A responsibility has been added that the second referee must verify and confirm to the first referee that the 24th point has been scored (14th point in a deciding set). (5-4-3b(16)) This will require the second referee to properly confirm the scoring of the 24th (or 14th) point with the scorer to provide the proper communication to the first referee. During the pre-match instructions to the scorer, the second referee should request that the scorer point to the 24th (or 14th) point on the scoresheet so the second referee may quickly view this point. This needs to be an instantaneous process and should not cause a delay in the set. Then, the second

referee will indicate informal signal No. 1 for set point to the first referee.

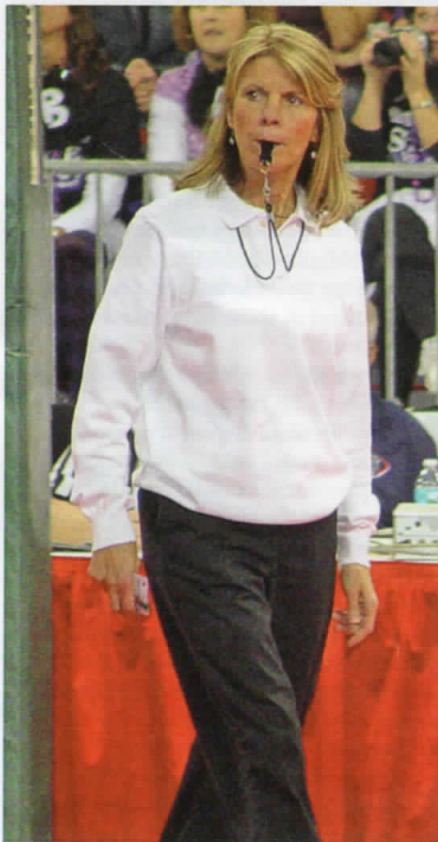
Once set point is scored, the first referee will signal the point and indicate end of set with the second referee mirroring the signals and send teams to endlines. (5-4-3b(2)) The first referee no longer has to wait to verify the score after the point as he/she has already confirmed the score prior to this point. After each set, the second referee will initial the scoresheet after final verification of score. This slight change in the end of set procedure should prevent delays often encountered at the end of each set and allow for a smoother transition between sets for participants. □

**Long-Sleeved Shirts for Officials OK'd**

With an adopted policy by the state association, volleyball officials can now wear all-white, long-sleeved, collared polo shirts or sweaters while working a match to address cold conditions within competition facilities. The Volleyball Rules Committee added a note to Rule 5-2-1, allowing for "a temporary adjustment in the officials uniform."

Officials are often required to work in gymnasiums that are quite cool and have worn different visible undergarments or different style shirts to keep warm. NFHS is allowing each state association to develop a policy to permit white long-sleeved collared polo shirts or sweaters with association logos to maintain the integrity of the official's uniform.

Referees, coaches and state association representatives were overwhelmingly in favor of the change, according to an NFHS questionnaire from last year. □



A state association can allow for officials to wear a long-sleeved, all-white collared polo shirt (left photo) or a sweater (right photo) to address cold conditions. Teresa McEldowney, Plover, Wis., (left photo) and Janice Byrd, Chattanooga, Tenn.

**QUICK TIP**

Never ignore a violation, but use preventive officiating to warn players or a coach of a *potential* violation.





Substitution requests made prior to the start of the set shall be permitted and recorded as a regular substitution in that set.

## Review of 2010 Rule Changes

While studying the new rules and editorial changes for 2011, volleyball officials and coaches should look back on the changes made for the 2010 season.

One of 11 rules changes made by the NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee for the 2010 season included allowing for the head coach at the beginning of a set to make a substitution after the lineup is submitted. The change allows for substitution requests to be made before play commences.

Occasionally, an inaccurate lineup is submitted by a coach. The rules committee felt that rather than beginning the set in a state of confusion for the players and officials and a penalty, allowing the head coach to substitute prior to the start of the set alleviates the problem.

### End-of-Set Procedure

In an effort to eliminate confusion at the end of the last set of the match, Rule 5-3-4e was amended to change the procedure and reduce court congestion. At the end of the match, the first referee shall blow the whistle, give the end-of-set signal and direct players to their respective end lines. After visually confirming the score with the second referee, the first referee shall blow the whistle and release the players.

The rules committee felt that it was more efficient to release the players from the end line and not require teams to

report to the team benches because many states and schools already incorporate a handshake once released before going to the benches. The rule now reflects what is the common trend.

### Team Members, Non-Team Members

Changes to Rules 2-5, 6-1 and 6-2 defined team members as all school representatives located in the team bench area, including but not limited to coaches, teammates, managers, trainers and players. All players on the same team in uniform are teammates, and players are now defined as those teammates who are on the court.

Non-team members include, but are not limited to: officials, media personnel and spectators. Individuals without a working media pass or designated school photographer's ID should not be in team or playable areas. All others must be located in spectator areas to avoid interference with play. Non-team members located in playable areas can delay and interfere with play. The playable area should be kept free of unauthorized persons to minimize risk of injury and interference with play during the contest.

It is recommended that media, especially still photographers, are no closer than six feet of the court and behind team benches or around the perimeter of the court in a location designated by host management.

### Flat Clips OK'd

Unadorned flat clips that are no longer than two inches in length were approved by the rules committee as a hair control device. Many feel that metal clips are less likely to slip out of the player's hair and fall onto the court. The clips also hold hair much tighter than unadorned bobby pins, which were approved by the committee for the 2009 season.

### Casts, Braces, Concussions

Changes made to Rules 4-1-1, 2, 3 and 4 outline the guidelines for guards, casts and braces allowed during play. Additionally, the use of prostheses must be authorized by the individual state associations. They must be determined to not be any more dangerous to players than the corresponding human body part(s) and do not put the opponent at a disadvantage.

The revised rules update the language and provide consistency among sports, where appropriate, regarding casts, braces, supports and prostheses.

### Libero Replacement Zone

Rule 2-1-8 was created to define the libero replacement zone as the area near the sideline between the attack line and the end line. The specific area on the floor is similar to the substitution zone as defined in Rule 2-1-7. ▶



### ► Unsporting Conduct

Rule 12-2-8d was amended to include all match assistant officials, such as line judges, scorers, timers and libero trackers as those who should not be disrespectfully addressed during a match by players or coaches. In previous seasons, the rules implied but did not specify that any disrespectful comments made by a coach, substitute or team attendant to assistant officials were unsporting.

### Scoring Points Clarified

The definition in Rule 1-3-1, scoring a point, was clarified by the rules committee and now reads: "When a team commits a fault, the result is a loss of rally and the opponent shall receive a point."

The change clarifies when a point is scored and when a rally has been completed.

### Uniform Modifications

Any modifications to a player's uniform, equipment or accessories due to medical or religious reasons requires, pending approval, a letter of authorization from the state association, according to revised Rule 4-1-8. The letter must be made available to the referees at or prior to the prematch conference.

The rules committee established an official procedure for players and coaches to follow when an accommodation or modification of the rules for participation in a match is being requested and granted due to medical or religious reasons. This rule (Rule 4, Note 2) has been modified beginning with the 2011 season.

### Net Foul or Net Serve Signal Revised

NFHS Official Volleyball Signal #6, Net Foul or Net Serve, was revised to improve game efficiency by requiring that only the first referee is required to signal the foul. Instead of using his/her outstretched arm to touch the side of the net, the first referee is only required to extend his/her arm to the side on which the foul occurred near the net with his/her fingers together. The first referee does not touch the net.

The rules committee felt that the second referee should not have to mirror the first referee, especially when the net serve stops play and is obvious to everyone watching. □

## Contrast is Everything with Libero Uniform

The growing use of side panels and long sleeves combined with the lightness or darkness of colors of the uniform top can sometimes make the contrast of a libero uniform questionable. When the rules of a legal libero uniform are bent and decisive contrast not always evident, it is difficult for coaches, officials and libero trackers to immediately recognize the libero from all angles, whether from the stand or the floor.

Despite the specificity in Rules 4-2-1 through 4, the libero uniform is not always in clear contrast to and distinct from the other members of the team. It is essential that the libero top be in sharp contrasting color to the color(s) used in the uniform tops of teammates. The primary color of the libero's uniform top must be different from any color that appears on more than 25 percent of the body of teammates' uniform tops, according to Rule 4-2-2.

If a style of uniform has a pattern of colors, including long sleeves and side panels, it may be difficult to use a libero uniform that contains those same colors, even if they are contrasting (blue/white

or red/white). In those cases, it may be wise to consider a single-color top for the libero or even use specific colors that would be completely different from any other jersey, such as neon yellow, green, pink, blue or orange. Using reverse uniform tops may not work well when using this style of uniform design.

When using home-and-away uniforms, if the colors are similar (for example, dark green for home and black for away), the libero top would not be legal because the colors are not contrasting. In selecting a contrasting color, be sure that the lightness or darkness of a color varies greatly from the uniforms worn by teammates. The use of a color of uniform that is 75 percent or more different than any color used by a libero's teammates makes it easier on coaches, officials and libero trackers to identify the libero in any match.

Coaches and school administrators are reminded to thoughtfully consider the requirements and styles of the libero uniform when ordering them to avoid any future problems. □



If a style of uniform has a pattern of colors, including stripes and side panels, it may be difficult to use a libero uniform that contains those same colors, even if they are contrasting. In those cases, it may be wise to consider a single-color top for the libero.



# Get Assistant Officials SET for the Season

By Cheryl Gleason

Hosting a volleyball competition is an exciting opportunity for a high school and its athletes. The privilege of being able to host requires advanced planning and preparation in many areas. Host schools must get SET for the season. One of the most important responsibilities a school has is to SELECT, EDUCATE and TRAIN all of the assistant officials.

Assistant officials in a volleyball contest include the scorer, libero tracker, timer and line judges. Each play an extremely important role in the administration of a volleyball match, therefore, host schools must SELECT (in advance) individuals to fill these roles, EDUCATE them on the responsibilities and duties of the position they will assume, and TRAIN them to successfully fulfill their role.

## SELECT

An important part of the selection process is identifying the four W's: what, who, when and where.

What is needed: A volleyball match/court will need five assistant officials. To identify the number of assistant officials needed: 1) Determine the number of dates your school will host; 2) Look at the number of teams participating/courts to be used on each date (example: a dual match = 1 court; a quad (four teams) = 2 courts).

Who can fill these positions: Find out if these positions must be filled by faculty (through negotiated agreement). If not, consider: parents, former players, other school athletes, area college students, faculty by departments, community leaders, etc.

## QUICK TIP

If a problem is discovered while inspecting the ball, court and equipment, go to the home team's coach or match administrator to correct the problem. Officials are not expected to fill a ball with air or deflate an over-inflated ball nor should they have to raise a net that is hanging too low. The manager or match administrator is responsible for correcting the problem(s).

When and where: Once individuals are identified: 1) Find out their dates of availability; 2) Assign to specific positions and send information on the responsibilities and duties of the position(s) (see Educate and Train below); 3) Set a master schedule and send to all assigned to work; 4) Notify (e-mail, text) a reminder to individuals the week prior to their assigned date to work.

## EDUCATE

The assistant officials play an extremely important role in the management of a volleyball match. In addition to training and practice in advance of the match, keys for success include understanding the position and its importance and knowledge of the position responsibilities and duties. The *NFHS Rules Book* and the *NFHS Case Book and Officials Manual* provide more detailed information regarding the responsibilities and duties of these positions.

### Scorer:

- Prematch: Report 20 minutes before match; record team lineups on scoresheet.
- Positioning: Sit at officials table, next to libero tracker.
- Primary responsibilities: Record score, substitutions, penalties and time-outs.

### Timer:

- Prematch: Report 20 minutes before match; inspect timing device.
- Positioning: Sit at officials table, next to scorer (if possible).
- Primary responsibilities: Run clock (3 minutes between sets, 60 second time-outs); Audio signals (as directed by R2); put up score if using timing/scoring unit and time prematch warm-up directed by the R2.

### Libero Tracker:

- Prematch: Report 20 minutes before match; record team lineups on tracking sheet.
- Positioning: Sit next to scorer at officials table.
- Primary responsibilities: Track/record the libero replacements and all substitutions.

**NOTE:** It is important for the tracker to understand who the libero player is – i.e., the libero player is a defensive specialist who plays on the back row only. This is the player who is wearing a uniform top different from his/her teammates.

### Line Judges (2):

- Prematch: Report 20 minutes before match; attend meeting with referees (R1 & R2).
- Positioning: As assigned by R1.
- Primary responsibilities: Assist referees with calls (FLAT-foot faults, line calls, antenna calls, player touches).

Several state associations have tutorials and/or PowerPoints on their Web sites that outline the responsibilities and duties for assistant volleyball officials.

## TRAIN

Would you want to be put in a position to do something in which you had no training or experience? I sure wouldn't. So let's treat people the way we would want to be treated. Give those you have identified to serve as an assistant official a fair chance to succeed in these important roles by organizing hands on training sessions.

**Key individuals to assist in your training endeavors are registered volleyball officials.** These officials (R1 and R2), while serving as the primary officials for the match, must understand and be able to perform the duties of all assistant officials.

### Training opportunities include:

**Preseason team scrimmage** — Invite/require all selected assistant officials to arrive one hour in advance of the scrimmage. Invite several primary officials in your area to attend and assist in conducting hands-on training in all areas. When it is scrimmage time, ask the primary officials to shadow the assistant officials and assist/mentor as needed.

**Official's clinics** — Many official clinics offer training for assistant officials. Check to see if your state association conducts official clinics. Schools should be aware of these ▶



► opportunities in their area and arrange to register assistant officials and transport, if needed.

**Mentoring opportunities** — Ask veteran assistant officials to serve as mentors for new, up-and-coming assistants. For table officials, ask new officials to sit beside a veteran during a match to observe or reverse the roles and have veterans shadow new officials

(i.e., assist them as they work). As for line judges, observing veteran line judges is an excellent way to prepare to work.

**READY, GET “SET”!** Well-managed volleyball events don’t just happen. They require advanced planning and preparation by the host school. The time that schools devote to Selecting, Educating and Training assistant officials

is key to the success of a home volleyball contest. So, prepare now to make the experience of “getting to serve” as an assistant volleyball official a memorable and rewarding opportunity.

*Cheryl Gleason is assistant executive director of the Kansas State High School Activities Association and Section 5 representative to the NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee. □*

## What Was That You Signaled?

By Patsy Burke

**H**ow many times as the first referee have you looked across the court and your partner has that “deer in the headlights” look on his/her face or the coach is looking over at you with a puzzled expression and asking the second referee “what was that call?” because the signal you just gave was so sloppy or completed so quickly they didn’t have a clue what foul had been assessed?

Seems like we continuously harp on proper signals/mechanics, but they are the sole means of communication between officials and between coaches, players and spectators. Once again, we need to remind ourselves that the signals we give as the R1 and R2 are our “language” — our way to efficiently signal the start and stop of the play, not only with each other, but to coaches, players, the scorer and fans about what is happening in the match. The combination of our whistle and signals allow us to maintain a smooth flow of the match as well as constantly communicate with those around us.

We expect players and coaches to give their best, be professional in all aspects of the game, so as referees shouldn’t we do the same with our signals? Crisp, clean signals go a long way in helping convey our knowledge of volleyball, our observation of play, our confidence, professionalism and control of the match. You don’t want to hurry your signals, or be lax with the correct mechanics. Some officials suggest this approach: blow the whistle — breathe; signal the fault — breathe; cleanly signal which team receives the point and next serve — relax. Easy isn’t it? ►



Karl Weingartner, Thousand Oaks, Calif., signals a violation for four hits during a set.



## ▶ Signaled

Here are a few things to remember:

- Avoid making two signals at once — this just confuses everyone and could possibly give the appearance you are in a hurry to get the match over.

- Make your signals big; however, they don't need to be exaggerated or robotic.

- Don't make your signals in front of your face (you need to be able to see your partner and/or players/coaches).

- Don't be too casual as this could give the appearance that you don't care about the match.

- Keep those thumbs tucked in/flat against your index finger when beckoning for serve/signaling a point

or ball out of bounds. On an "out ball" your signal should not look like a football touchdown or field goal.

- Substitution request signal should be a circular motion – two rotations only.

- End of set signal is crossing arms over chest, hands open (not fists), palms facing body, but not hugging yourself.

- In your post match debriefing with your partner discuss your signal sequences and mechanics.

These are just a few tips to help us as referees remember that proper signals/mechanics are so very important in relaying the message about what is happening in the match. So once again, let us remind ourselves

that practicing our signals in front of a mirror or video with review are great ways to see what we do right and what we do wrong. It's a great way to dust off the cobwebs that might have been gathering during the offseason. No matter how long you may have been officiating this sport, all of us can spend a few minutes fine-tuning our signals each season.

Do signals matter in how you officiate a volleyball match? Absolutely!

*Patsy Burke is a member of the NFHS Officials Association and has been an Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) volleyball and softball official for 14 years. She is currently the AHSAA state volleyball instructor. □*

# How to Recruit and Retain Line Judges; Importance of Their Role



A trained, alert line judge knows to look for touches and is ready to keep up with the speed of play. Tim Joly, Seymour, Wis.

Under Rule 5-1-1, line judges are part of the assistant officials crew along with the official scorer, timer and libero tracker. The host school has the responsibility to secure the line judges.

The responsibilities and the importance of the line judges have increased as the game of volleyball has evolved into a fast-paced, powerful and aggressive sport. Line judges play a critical role for the referees.

In today's game, as rally scoring has replaced the side-out version of the game, every completed rally results in a point. Thus, every call a line judge makes results in a point for one of the teams and a loss of rally for the other. A line judge who has not been trained will miss those critical calls because he/she does not know to look ahead of the ball when it is heading toward a boundary line. The line judge must be alert to the ball traveling between the antennas when being played at a sharp angle from a playable area, know to look for touches and ready to keep up with the speed of play. And, of course, giving the proper clean, crisp signals for the R1.

Line judges can help make the match go smoothly and be assets to the

referees or they can become a detriment to the match if they don't fulfill their responsibilities. Just watch how the atmosphere of a match can change if a line judge is missing calls, giving the wrong call and not keeping up with play. Coaches, players and the referees must now deal with a variable that can impact the results of the play.

In most regular season matches, the line judges are not registered officials. They are usually players, students or adults. Thus, the first task is to secure a pool of line judges and then provide the opportunity for hands on training.

So what are some ways schools have found to recruit and retain their line judges? Certainly if there can be a fee for the position, this always helps. Having a newer official come with the referees and work lines for experience is another opportunity. Working with your officials association can be very helpful. Providing an activity pass for all fall school activities to volunteers is another method. Working with your opponents to provide line judges with free admittance to the home and away matches when working the match is another option. Utilizing interested ▶



▶ parents when their daughter/son is not playing is another source. Another possible avenue for securing line judges is to work out an agreement with the coaches of another sports team or school activity to provide students in return for your players working in various positions at their games or activities. Using players, JV for varsity and vice versa, can

also work if properly trained so the experiences are positive. You may even get these individuals to pursue officiating once out of high school and beyond. If the school does not have funds to budget a fee, providing a gift card at the end of the season just might do the trick. The gift cards could be provided by the booster club or donated by local vendors. One might

also provide the line judge with school apparel.

These are all suggestions of how a coach and school might go about developing a good pool of individuals to become your line judges. Once you have them, the next step is good training so your line judges “grease the wheel” and do not become the “squeaky wheel” for your matches. □

## 2011 Points of Emphasis

### Sturdy Platforms, Contrasting Libero Uniforms, Assistant Officials and Suspended Net Systems

#### Officials Platform

As listed in Rule 3-1-6, a safe, stable platform, which elevates the first referee’s head to between two and three feet above the top of the net, is required. Stepladders, jump boxes, and other devices not specifically designed as referee platforms should not be used. It is recommended that the top of the platform be at least 18 inches long by 12 inches wide and steps up to the platform be provided. The platform height should also be adjustable to accommodate the varying heights of officials.

The front and sides of the officials’ platform must be padded to a minimum height of 5 ½ feet with at least a 1-inch-thick resilient, shock-absorbing material (such as polyethylene foam) in accordance with Rule 3-1-3a. If the referee’s platform is not padded, according to the rules, the match shall not be played and the state association notified of the padding problem. The first referee is not expected to work from a platform that is not safe, stable and properly padded.

When ordering a new officials’ platform, please consider the following: proper padding, adjustable height, a width meeting the minimum recommendations, steps that allow for easy access to the platform, and a well-cushioned standing surface.

Just as equipment has improved in other sports, this also holds true with volleyball officials’ platforms. Match

officials are dependent upon schools to provide quality equipment so they can carry out their responsibilities in an environment free of unnecessary risk of injury.

#### Libero Uniforms Clearly Recognizable

As stated in Rule 4-2-2, the libero shall wear a uniform top that is immediately recognizable from all angles as being in clear contrast to and distinct from the other members of the team. The primary color of the libero’s uniform top must be different from any color that appears on more than 25 percent of the body of teammates’ uniform tops.

In determining the body of the uniforms, the sleeves and collar should be ignored. The style and trim of the libero’s uniform top may differ from teammates’ uniforms, but the shorts must be like-colored to teammates. Consider the hue and saturation of the uniform (including side panels) to determine if the uniform is immediately recognized from all angles from a distance. For example, if a team wears a uniform with a dark purple back and white front, a black libero uniform would not be a distinct contrast from the back of the players’ jerseys and is therefore not easily recognizable from all angles. When ordering a libero uniform, all factors should be considered to ensure a distinct contrast from the uniform of teammates.

#### Host School Shall Coordinate Assistant Officials

According to Rule 5-1-1, assistant officials include scorer, libero tracker, time and line judges. The host school is responsible for ensuring that all assistant official positions are covered with trained personnel prior to the match. State association policy may exist on how assistant official positions are covered. It is then the host school’s responsibility to ensure that these positions are covered accordingly. This may include prematch arrangements with the visiting school(s).

In all cases, assistant officials shall be properly trained before being assigned to one of these duties. The match officials have a prematch ▶

#### QUICK TIP

When being challenged by a player or coach, consider your body language and what it is saying to the person arguing with you and other players, coaches and spectators. Avoid crossing your arms in front of your chest or a “hands-on-hips” stance with your chest thrust out. It makes you appear to be the aggressor. Instead, maintain control by either placing your hands behind your back while standing tall and standing to the side of the person arguing, not directly in front of him/her while he/she is venting. That stance is not confrontational, but it shows that you are in control.



## ► POEs

responsibility to review the duties with the assistant officials. It is not the responsibility of the match officials to train the assistant officials. Each member of the officiating crew has specific responsibilities. Without proper training, the assistant officials may not carry out their responsibilities and thus have a negative impact on the match ranging from confusion to the wrong team scoring points.

### Suspended Net Systems

Several gymnasiums across the country are utilizing a suspended net system for interscholastic volleyball. These systems are attached to the ceiling and are unfolded to the floor. There are several styles in these systems.

Rule 2-2-2 states “Cables, which are used to retract a ceiling-suspended net system and located only on one side of the net, are playable overhead obstructions.” Should the system also



The ball is out of bounds and becomes dead if it touches the net supports on the vertical extensions of a suspended net system.

have poles which are on one side and used to retract the system could result in replay at the R1’s discretion. The portion of the standards extending to the ceiling are considered an extension of the floor standard.

The ball is out of bounds and becomes dead if it touches the net supports on these vertical extensions. It is important the referee’s platform be stable when using a ceiling suspended system. □

# Professionalism and Appearance

## Positive Attitude, Preparation Essential Toward Gaining Respect

By Marsha E. Goodwin

Professionalism defines who we are as volleyball officials. This multi-faceted component of the officiating world is vital to our roles as guardian and enforcer of the rules. One could look at this broad subject in three

### QUICK TIP

It is far better to be open-minded and accept constructive criticism from supervisors, assigners and veteran officials than to only talk about your accomplishments from a match. Don't make excuses for your mistakes. If a veteran official or supervisor indicates specific areas that you need to work on, listen to the advice and take the necessary steps to improve. You will be a much better official as a result.

phases: attitude, appearance, and activity. Attitude includes our mental approach and preparation for the role of an official, being constantly aware of how we are perceived by others, both on and off the court. Our appearance is critical to our receiving respect as an official; we must “look the part to sell the call.” The activity component includes how we exhibit our knowledge of the rules and protocols involved in managing the actual contest.

Our attitude is reflected in our ability to be dependable, prompt, trustworthy, and knowledgeable. It is important that we honor our commitments when we accept matches. Once a commitment is made, an assignment should never be turned back unless there is a true emergency. Too often we hear of officials who accept matches and if a “better assignment” comes along, they are

quick to turn them back or cancel if something else comes up.

Officials should not just be on time, they should always be early. Plan for the traffic delay or unforeseen minor problems that occur when traveling to assignments. It is important that officials communicate honestly with each other, with the schools, and with the assigners. There is no excuse for not knowing the rules. Study, study, study! Utilize the *NFHS Volleyball Rules Book* for the actual rules and the *NFHS Volleyball Case Book and Manual* as a guide to tell us how to officiate and mechanics. If your state has modifications to the rules and protocols, educate yourself to stay abreast of those specific policies. Check your assigning site often and communicate with your assigned partner and site well in advance of the date of the contest.

Officials need to be aware of how they are perceived, both on and off the ►



► court. Being professional includes portraying the image of a professional; never use tobacco on a school campus or consume alcoholic beverages while in uniform. As officials, we need to give back to the sport. We need to become mentors for less-experienced officials. We need to ask for feedback ourselves, from our partner, more experienced officials and, often, we can learn from newer officials. Always accept any sincere suggestions and then decide if that advice will assist you in becoming a better official.

Our dedication to the sport encompasses much more than just the paycheck that we see at the end of an assignment. We should always strive to improve, regardless of the number of years involved in officiating. Seek out clinics, Web sites, and other officiating opportunities to improve officiating skills. Watch other officials work. Watch higher-level matches. Always challenge yourself and set goals to improve your capabilities as a professional volleyball official.

### Take Pride in How You Look

Our appearance in uniform is constantly scrutinized by others. The uniform should be clean, neat, pressed and fit properly. Shoes should be kept cleaned and replaced when worn out. Many officials carry their shoes in a bag and never wear them outside.

It is more important than ever that officials maintain a healthy appearance. Wearing a uniform that is too big or too small diminishes our credibility as an official. The hair should be clean, neat and well-groomed. Men should also pay attention to being clean shaven or maintain well-groomed facial hair. Women and men should avoid wearing too much jewelry and follow the state association policy.

### Don't Leave Home Without It

An official should be well-equipped with the necessary items to conduct the contest: whistles/lanyards, red/yellow cards, ball pressure device, net height measuring device, ball pump, red and blue/black pens, lineup cards and pencils if those are utilized, rules book, a wrist watch/stop watch, and a bag to transport all of those items. Cell phones should not be seen or heard courtside. It is also important to clean out your bag

occasionally. For hygiene purposes, the whistles should be regularly cleaned. Be aware of the image that you portray. Accept criticism in a positive manner and always strive to become a better official. Look and do your best for every match.

### Keep Focused On the Match

During our officiating assignments, focus on the contest at hand. Knowledge of the rules is vital to "selling the call." Keep abreast of particular ground rules or protocols that might not be listed in the *NFHS Case Book and Manual*. For example, schools may have rules about their particular facility that are not pertinent to other sites.

Communicate well in advance of the contest with the host school and the working partner to confirm the dates and times of the match and try to have the referees to enter the facility together. It is important to find the host school administrator upon arrival in the gymnasium and determine where that person will be located during the event.

A thorough prematch meeting with your partner will aid in avoiding problems during the match. Arrive courtside in plenty of time to allow you both to accomplish all of our prematch duties so that the match begins on time. Be aware of the protocol if there is a special presentation to occur such as senior night. Conduct the prematch coin toss in a timely fashion, beginning with introduction of the officials, coaches, and captains. Keep this meeting brief; this is not a rules clinic!

Use the language of the rules book in instructing the assistant officials. Use a visible timing device to assist in controlling warm-ups. Officials should avoid conversations with anyone in the facility unless it is pertinent to the responsibilities of the match. Unless there is an emergency, once the officials assume the role courtside, they should not leave the facility until the conclusion of the match. Again, know the rules and procedures to officiate a match. Unless there is a particular state association adoption, ALL rules should be enforced. An official does not have the authority to "let a rule slide" and choose to enforce only some of the rules. Such action undermines others' perception of the professionalism of volleyball officials and the integrity of the game.

### Pay attention to details

Anticipate potential problems and use preventive officiating whenever possible. Conduct sincere postmatch discussions away from the court at the conclusion of the assignment between partners. Ask for feedback from the support work crew. If there were problems that need to be reported to the state association or assigner, these should be addressed within 24 hours of the contest.

Try to focus on the positive aspects of the match while sharing how situations were handled during the match. Again, there is no substitute for prematch communication and preparation between referees and assistant officials. Perception is reality.

In conclusion, being a professional volleyball official can be a daunting task. It is important that officials maintain a positive attitude, look the part and do the best job possible when officiating a match.

Always strive to improve and maintain a level of professionalism that makes others admire you as an official. Take an honest look at yourself, your attitude, your abilities and your appearance. Then ask yourself: Would other officials want to work with me? Am I being the best official that I can be? Did I do my best for the teams? How do others perceive me? Constantly strive to improve your attitude, your appearance, and do your best in officiating the competition. Be proud that you are a professional volleyball official.

*Marsha E. Goodwin, Cleveland, Tenn., is the Section 3 representative to the NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee and the State Supervisor of Officials with the Tennessee Secondary Schools Athletic Association. She has officiated high school and collegiate volleyball for 35 years. □*

### QUICK TIP

Perception is reality when addressing coaches and players. Use "Coach" when speaking with a coach, not his or her name. Use a number when speaking to a player. Be cordial but brief. Answer their questions and acknowledge their statements.



## POINT OF EMPHASIS:

# Does Your Gym Have a Safe Platform?

The volleyball season is just around the corner and coaches and their athletic directors have worked together to be certain all is ready for the new season. Uniforms, volleyballs, scorebook, transportation, referees, other contest officials and workers are all in place and have been checked and double checked. Likewise, the courts are all marked, the scoreboard and timing system have been checked, the net system is ready, and the gymnasium sound system is ready to go for the first match.

However, have you checked your gym to see if the referee's platform meets or exceeds the requirements in Rule 3-1-6? This piece of volleyball equipment is many times overlooked in both an annual review and in replacing to keep current with the demands on the referee and what is needed to provide a platform free of risk and allows the referee to perform his/her match responsibilities.



Officials must rely on the host school to provide a platform that is stable and does not place the official at a risk of injury.

Let's review the requirements and recommendations for the referee's platform. Rule 3-1-6 requires the platform to elevate the first referee's head to between 2 and 3 feet above the top of the net. It is also recommended the top of the platform be at least 18 inches long by 12 inches wide, and that steps up to the platform be provided.

Officials cannot bring their own platforms. They must rely on the host school to provide a platform that is stable and does not place the official at a risk of injury. They depend on this provided piece of equipment to allow them to carry out their match responsibilities and to be in a position to adequately observe play. Finally, officials must rely on the schools to upgrade the referee's platform just as other pieces of equipment are replaced to keep up with the demands of the sport.

So what's in your gym ... do you have a safe referee's platform? □

## Seven Ways to Manage Your Conversations

Dealing with adversarial relationships can be challenging for a referee. These seven tips will make your difficult job a bit easier.

### 1. Pause before responding.

Let the other person get more words in if he/she wants. Don't cut him/her off; that only exacerbates the situation. In responding, avoid using words like "but" and "however" because they usually cancel out the first part of a sentence, lessening the message. "I understand the situation, but we're going to have to ..." is an example of how the word "but" lessened the effect of the initial positive statement "I understand."

### 2. Discreetly praise players.

When appropriate, congratulate them on good plays when appropriate and encourage sportsmanship. You can win over many players with a kind

word; that can help you later in the match if problems arise. Remember, comments to players should be kept to a minimum.

### 3. No matter whom you're dealing with, apply the "golden rule."

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Be reasonable with the words you choose and the tone you use. It will go a long way to handling situations effectively.

### 4. It's OK to say you made a mistake.

Honesty is your best policy. Under no circumstances should you try to change the facts to get out of trouble. Recipients know and then they'll think you can't be trusted. Referees must be trustworthy.

An old school of thought in officiating was, "Never admit making a mistake." That theory has gone away

over time. If you blew a call, it's OK to admit it quietly to the coach or player. Many times, they'll respect you more for that than if you tried to twist the truth and equivocate. Most coaches understand you can't change judgment calls, but admitting you missed it often ends the argument. Do it too often, though, and your reputation will suffer.

### 5. If a coach or player is begging, listen to that person.

If a reply is necessary, reply with an even tone. Be brief. Do not use sarcasm or put-downs. Acknowledge that you've heard and understood the complaint. That's not an admission of guilt or error on your part, it merely shows the person you are listening. Many times, all the person wants is to be heard. If more than a comment, the coach should be given the opportunity to call a time-out if he/she really thinks there is a misapplication of a rule. ▶



## ► 6. You may be able to smile or use humor to diffuse a potentially volatile situation.

Be careful; what you think might be humorous may not be to the other person, thus adding to the problem. However, smiles and a deflective word can work in the heat of battle. A referee who can chuckle or smile is in control. A referee who can't see the humor in a situation may be perceived as uptight.

However, referees shouldn't get into joke-telling. It's simply too dangerous because people differ in what amuses them. What you might think is a great joke might offend the listener. Try humor sparingly and make it as light as possible.

Humorous attempts can also cause problems. Here are two examples using the exact same attempt at humor. One worked, one didn't.

Former World Cup soccer referee Vinnie Mauro said in an interview, "I remember a player who had a breakaway and missed the shot. Afterward, he used a four-letter word, which I heard. I said to him, 'Hey, what if your mother heard you say that word?' He chuckled and said, 'I'm sorry, ref.' He didn't direct his comment at anyone, so instead of penalizing him, I used humor to make my point."

In a similar situation, a volleyball player hit the ball out of bounds and used a four-letter word, which the referee heard. The referee used the same exact line that Mauro used, saying, "Hey, what if your mother heard you say that word?" The player responded, "My mother died a month ago." Discretion is the byword.

## 7. Don't ever utter the phrase, "It's just a game."

Few phrases turn participants to rage quicker than that one. Remember, they've worked all week, all season and perhaps all summer for that match. It is critically important to them, no matter what the sport or level. That phrase is often interpreted by coaches and players as a flippant "I don't care" response. Basically, it is demeaning.

Follow those seven tips when dealing with players and coaches and the relationships developed will be positive for the game and your style of officiating. □

# Best Ways to Study the Rules

By Jeffrey Stern

For many referees, studying the rules book is akin to root canal: painful but necessary. At least the dentist has Novocain or laughing gas. No wonder drug is going to make specifications regarding the circumference of the volleyball or the width of the lines on the playing surface seem like scintillating reading.

But digging into the rules book doesn't have to feel like a death march. It does require concentration and perseverance, the same as you'd need to work a tough match. Here are some tips to lighten the load.

## Prioritize

Every rule has a purpose and is necessary in its own way. But some rules are more important than others. So while you need to familiarize yourself with regulations regarding such banalities as court dimensions, the bigger-ticket items like violations, penalties, fouls and enforcements require more attention.

The starting point for any study session should be the terminology. Reading the rules book without knowing the definitions is like starting to read a murder mystery from the middle. If you don't know the suspects — or in the case of the rules, the definitions — the terms used in the rest of the rules book aren't going to make sense. A thorough understanding of the terminology allows you to figure out who's who and what's what.

## Understand spirit and intent

You can memorize a passage and recite it verbatim to anyone who asks, but that doesn't do you any good unless you understand why the rule exists. In general, the spirit and intent behind a rule is to either promote safety of participants or prevent one team or athlete from gaining an advantage over an opponent. Some rules do both. Understanding why the rule exists gives you a leg up on enforcing it.

An example is the infield fly rule used in baseball in softball. Without it, the defense could allow pop ups to fall like raindrops and turn a bunch of double plays without expending a whole lot of effort. The infield fly rule provides a balance, guaranteeing the defense an out while assuring runners they don't have to put themselves in jeopardy of being retired.

## Correlate the rule to situations

Again, the rules are just words on paper. Translating those words into knowledge requires the additional step of thinking when and how a rule might come into play. You can think back to matches you've worked or consult a case book or approved rulings to find applicable situations and discern the proper ruling.

When watching a match on TV have your rules book handy. When an unusual play occurs, ask yourself, "What would the call be in my match?" Then look up the rule to see if you're right.

## Use memory aids

New rules are delineated in rules books (usually with gray boxes) for easy reference. If there are rules you encounter that are particularly troublesome or you'd like to refer to often, use a highlighting marker to make them easier to find when you're doing your studying.

In school, you might have learned the names of the Great Lakes by using the acronym HOMES (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior). That sometimes works with the rules as well. For instance, a football official might use MUFF (Messed Up False Fumble) to remember the difference between a muff and a fumble.

## Don't go at it alone

Many activities are easier or at least less ponderous in groups. So it is with rules study. Get together with your partner, a group during the offseason or form a study group with other local officials. You can help other referees with rules they don't understand and vice versa.

## Bite-size is better

Rules study isn't like cramming for a college mid-term. You might get through the entire rules book in one sitting, but it's doubtful you'll retain much of anything.

The smarter play is to study at a more leisurely pace. Take the rules book with you on a plane or drop it in your briefcase. When you find yourself with a couple of spare minutes, pull out the rules book and study a few pages. Studies have shown that humans retain information they gather just before they fall asleep. So keep a copy on the nightstand.

*Jeffrey Stern is Referee's senior editor.* □



# Eight Ways on How Not to Officiate

By Julie Sternberg

Remember when your parents used to warn you, “Don’t ever do that” in reference to another kid throwing a tantrum in public or back-talking to an adult? By pointing out the bad behaviors, they were teaching you what to avoid. Sometimes you can learn a lot from the bad guys.

The same holds true in officiating. There are some referees who are on the lower end of the ratings for a reason, but you can still learn from them. If you figure out what not to do, you’ll be on your way to officiating the right way.

## 1. Don’t care about your performance.

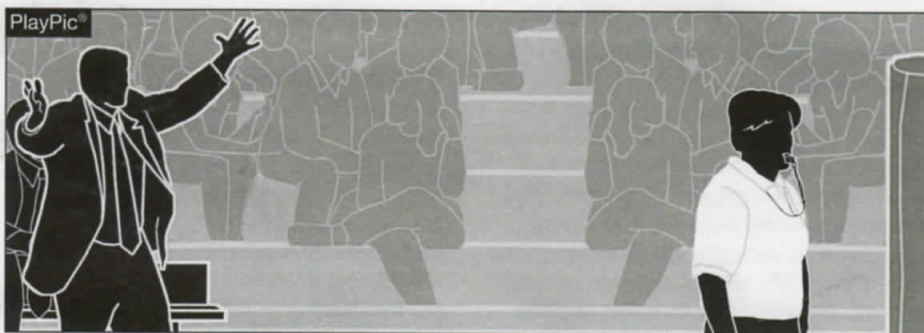
If you don’t care, it shows. It can be apparent in your arrival time, appearance and attitude. Plan ahead so that you arrive at the match site early. When you get there, be courteous to administrators and participants. Show them that you want to be there. Sometimes locker room facilities (or lack of a changing area) dictate that you come dressed, but otherwise bring your uniform along. And don’t just pull it out from the laundry and stuff it in your bag; make sure it is clean and wrinkle-free and shoes are polished. Judgments are made on how your uniform looks.

## 2. Don’t have a strong prematch conference.

Why would you want to get on the same page with your crewmates? So you don’t crash and burn, for one thing. The short time you spend with your partner confirming positions, coverages, rules questions, team tendencies and officiating tactics will help you manage the match. It will help you focus on your individual responsibilities and work as a cohesive unit. You’ll work better together when you know what to expect from one another.

## 3. Don’t control your emotions.

Imagine if you just let your emotions have free reign: A coach berates you following a call, you step up and fight fire with fire. Guess who will get burned in that situation? Here’s a hint: It won’t be the



Tuning out whining and worthless rants is a good thing, but for the most part, referees should listen to what coaches have to say and address appropriately.

coach, even if he or she started it. “The coach was just defending his/her player,” the school or league will say. “Everyone knows you, as the referee, should know better.” And you should know better. No matter how good it might feel to raise your voice back at a coach or fan, it is not an option. You need to be the calming presence on the court. Whether it’s in response to remarks by a coach or if opponents get into it with each other, referees need to be there and be ready to provide the level head (and penalties, if necessary).

## 4. Don’t admit your errors.

Mistakes happen. If you never admit a mistake, you lose credibility. Sometimes the best response to a coach who tells you, “You missed one,” is to admit it, if you know the error occurred. The coach likely won’t have too much to say after that. It’s hard to argue when you agree with him or her, after all. Be careful with using the mea culpa method too often. If you’re always admitting mistakes, it means you’re always making them.

## 5. Don’t listen to coaches.

Tuning out whining and worthless rants is a good thing, but for the most part, referees should listen to what coaches have to say. They might offer a legitimate comment that deserves consideration, whether it’s a measured criticism of a call or a suggestion to watch for a certain action. Many coaches understand the game, and if you tune them

out completely, you might be missing out on a chance to elevate your performance.

## 6. Don’t consider whether to respond.

Just because you’re listening, doesn’t mean you have to respond. Not every challenging statement from a coach requires a response. In fact, if it’s a statement, it often doesn’t. After consideration, if you decide to respond to coaches’ comments, sometimes the right response is non-verbal. You might nod your head, glance in the direction of the coach or shake your head. Those actions can often get your response across better than words and don’t disrupt the flow of play as much.

## 7. Don’t ignore the crowd.

Sometimes it’s important to listen to a coach, but how about the crowd? Learn to tune out the fans. Let the school administrator take care of the crowd control and focus on what is happening on the court. If a fan is interfering with the set and the administrator has disappeared, your focus may need to shift and communicate with the host school head coach.

## 8. Don’t talk with players.

It’s pretty tough to work a match well and not communicate with the players. Whether it’s an acknowledgment of sporting behavior by the player or a stern discussion with the captain(s) to prevent a flare-up, an occasional comment to players can be a good thing. Keep your pertinent comments to a minimum!

Julie Sternberg is Referee’s managing editor. □

