

Article 6: Ideas for Effective Responding

Look back on your career and try and remember when you got into trouble with your supervisor. It was possibly a call you made during the game or something you said to a coach or player. Normally a call or decision you made can be defended. What you say many times cannot.

One of the important qualities of an effective referee is the ability to gain the respect of the players and coaches. There are times that you might make the correct call but the result is a volatile reaction. Too often it becomes a difficult task to diffuse a situation. The development and use of good responding skills is something that all officials should pay greater attention to. The following are a few basics to assist in the process.

Attributes and Basics of Good Responding

- Have an aura of control
- Avoid being defensive or combative
- Be the voice of reason
- Try and give people a chance to come down
- Recognize the level of tension or anger
- Defuse animosity
- Always maintain your dignity
- Demonstrate empathy and respect for coach and players

FUNDAMENTALS OF RESPONDING

Listening

The first step in effective responding is listening. When engaging a coach or player YOU MUST appear that you are listening to them. This usually helps bring them down a notch when they see they have your attention. It is important to try to always listen first, and try acknowledging their point of view. Some phrases that can be used are, "I see your point.", "You have a good point.", "I've heard you.", or "That's possible." After listening, state your position in a brief conversation, and then move on. Most times by listening you can take the information and inform the coach about a rule or application, which usually helps put them back in a defensive mode rather than continuing to attack. Also you can get a feel for the tension and validity of their argument. By listening first and then responding to what they said, there may be some closure after your words.

Be Aware of and Practice Non verbal Communication

Some people think that the first response to a coach was when they started speaking. A coach or player knows the tone of the response even before you start speaking by observing your body language. Sometimes we lose them before we even say a word. If you make a face, raise your hands in defense or scowl, you've probably lost them already. Watch how you talk with your hands and don't let a coach use his to talk to you. When a person talks with his hands it appears there is more going on than a simple discussion about a simple play. When I see a coach waving his hands, I simply ask him to put his hands down and tell me what he wants to tell me because I will listen.

