

ARTICLE 9

KEYS TO BEING A GOOD PARTNER

It is the manner in which we interact and the manner in which we relate as a crew. One of the prime fundamentals of officiating, if you are going to have the end result looking good, is to have three people on the same page. Those three people feel that they are a team and that it is “one for all and all for one”. If you do not have this, I do not think that you have a very good crew.

Generally, we think of partnering in terms of what we do on the floor. Partnering starts a lot of times well before you get on the floor. It starts in the car, the restaurant, in a clinic with each other and with the telephone calls. That is what all the commitment is about that you are putting in to make your relationships strong, so that when you referee as a team, you are going to pick each other up. I don't just look at partnering with what you do on the court. Partnering is a verb and as you know a verb means action.

The keys to being a good partner on and off the court are:

The first thing that we have to do is to step outside of our comfort zone. We must do what is right for the situation. We must do what is right, not only for our partners, but more importantly for the game. That helps the kids, the fans, the television cameras, coaches and the scorer's table. When you think about partnering, you have to think far beyond the two people that you are involved with. If you look at that from a broader scope, it becomes part of game management.

Prepare yourself mentally so that you can reduce the anxiety and the fear of failure. When you are in officiating, the fear of failure is probably at its highest level. You put yourself in this box, afraid to make a mistake. There has to be a tremendous mental preparation each day that you are not afraid to make a mistake. You want to be in a position to make that last call. You are the shortstop with two outs and the bases loaded and you want the ball to get hit to you.

I think the top official has to have this trait. He has to have the guts to want to take the last shot from his area. Make the big charge-block call, wave off the basket or call the goaltending. Making the call, knowing very well that it is going to bring a lot of controversy. If you are not ready to be in that position then you are not mentally prepared to officiate.

I have seen the fear of failure absolutely paralyze people. It is very obvious to observers and coordinators when an official is paralyzed. Their decision-making is very slow, they don't trust their instincts, they're thinking too much about what they should or should not do. You have to trust yourself before anyone else can trust you. You have to be willing to go out there and make mistakes. That will help you tremendously down the road.

You must maintain perspective. You are just a small dot in this game of basketball. You must keep it in perspective that this game is not there for you, that the game is there for the kids. You are there for the game.

Let your competitiveness show on the court through being the best that you can be. Every referee has an obligation to develop his full potential. God gave certain referees talents that no one else has. Everyone does not have the same talent. Just because you put on the shirt does not make you a referee. You are an official trying to do a job.

Check your ego so that it is not running over someone else's. I hope that you have an ego. I want my officials to have an ego, but you have to have your ego checked. You cannot work this game without having some sort of ego. However, if your ego gets in your way, you have major problems. You do need an ego, but it must be conforming style and not confrontational style.

Give and receive feedback professionally and respectfully. Don't have all of the answers when you may not know all of the questions. You do not want to get into a situation where a supervisor will not criticize you because you think you have all the answers. If I ever quit criticizing an official, I have written you off.

Celebrate sincerely, not your success, but the success of others. What a way to bond with someone if you show more joy and excitement about what they were able to do than they do. That is one of the great characteristics of successful people, that they can celebrate other people's success. Even though deep down it is hurting you, don't make someone feel bad to tell you that they have moved up or gotten more games.

Contribute to the quality of other people's experiences. You want to lift someone up or help them out if they have put themselves in a situation where they are not having a quality experience on the floor. This aspect can carry over to off of the floor as well.

Accept responsibility for our self, including our circumstances, our decisions and our attitude. Who you are and what happens to you is not someone else's fault. It is not someone else's fault if you do not succeed. Be a problem solver, not a finger pointer. Be a part of the solution and not part of the problem. Don't be bitter, get better.