

ARTICLE 5

Official / Player Relationships: Developing a Rapport

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Although basketball officiating requires sound judgment and a passion for the game, it also requires great people skills. The game is hard and fast, and thus emotions have a tendency to run high on any given night in any arena in the world.

When you turn on the television to watch an NBA game you will no doubt see the players talking with the officials on every other play (every play if it's the playoffs!). The reason that many pro officials are so successful is that they have excellent people skills to diffuse potential problems. You can rest assured that if a problem continues, technical fouls become the norm.

It is no different at the collegiate level. Although officials deal more closely with coaches at the collegiate level, dealing with the players at this level is also a must. Both players and coaches at the collegiate level bring a great amount of intensity.

Dealing with Players

During the course of the game it is inevitable that a player is going to feel that his/her opponent committed a foul or violation that went unnoticed by an official. You are the person that they will go to. "Ref, he hit me on the arm." "No foul ref?" "He traveled ref!" These are the things that we as officials have heard before during the course of the game and will continue to hear throughout our careers. So what is the best way to handle it?

We all know that a fine line exists when a player is asking about a play and then refereeing it. Be firm and fair; there is nothing wrong with lending an ear, but it cannot be on every play. If you allow a player and or coach to question you on every play your concentration will no doubt be lowered and you will no longer be refereeing at your highest level. Some "diffusers" may be: "Hey 12, I let you get away with the same thing down there." or "You know, I may have missed that one. I'll make sure I get a better look at it next time." This gives the player a "comfort level" in knowing that they can approach you in a situation. But please do keep in mind that being approachable needs to be a two way street, i.e. "Hey 12, do me a favor, tell 44(his teammate) that he's moving on his screens and he has to get set." We all need to work together to make the game go as smooth as possible.

Developing a Rapport

Treat the player as you would treat anyone else involved in the game. Be fair, honest and approachable. If a player goes outside the parameter you have set, The player's and coaches must respect the job that you are working hard at every night you are on

the court.

Finally, do not take yourself too seriously and have a sense of humor; that's being human. Always remember your place. The fans come to see the player's play and the coach's coach. We are there to make sure that the game is managed properly and in accordance with the rules.