

ARTICLE 1

PREPARING FOR THE SEASON PART 3 - George Toliver

In part one of this series we discussed ways to prepare yourself mentally for the upcoming season. In part two we looked at physical preparation, how to get your body in shape. Finally let's talk about a very important part of officiating that is often overlooked, social readiness. This includes your appearance, how you feel about yourself, your interaction with others, as well as some other things discussed below.

1. Your uniform. Hopefully, you have already prepared your body physically for a challenging season. If not there is still some time. I suggest you take a look at part one before continuing. Your physical condition is important, but so are the clothes that you put on your body! At the beginning of each season you should evaluate your officiating wardrobe. Have you worn the same pants, grey shirt, and shoes for the past FEW years? Do you have to suck in your stomach to zip the zipper? Is there a black patch under the arm pit of your shirt? Does the height of the hem on your pants reflect that you are in a flood plain? If you answered yes to any of these questions it is time to update your uniform. Unfortunately officials are often judged well before they even blow the whistle. This is why it is so important to have a uniform that is clean, fits, and looks good. You can't go wrong with a new wardrobe to help improve your presentation and comfort when you hit the floor.

2. Your shoes. What condition is your current pair of officiating shoes in? Are they glowing on the outside but you are on your 5th new innersole purchase from the local pharmacy on the inside? If you want to stay involved in this game for a long time you need to invest in the proper shoes. Proper shoes will help the pounding you do on the floor. Take the time to research and learn what shoes are best for your feet and the type of activity you are participating in. You want shoes that will be comfortable but at the same time provide you with the proper support that will protect your feet. An annual change of new shoes is certainly in order to keep the reduction of joint stress injuries.

3. Be professional. This means while you are on the court, in the locker room or in the car or on an airplane. When you interact with other remember that you are not only representing yourself but also the league and supervisor for which you officiate. Let it be known that you are focused on the game the job you have to do. This will go along way with coaches, supervisors, table personal, and all others involved with the game. They want to feel comfortable with the officials and know that they are giving it their best effort. If your are late to games, disrespectful, and present an attitude that you are above the game or your surroundings then you are not only hurting yourself, but your crew and supervisor as well.

4. Self confidence. All of the above things will contribute to self confidence. It is very important that an official believes in himself and his abilities. There is an

extreme amount of pressure placed on you every time you walk onto the court. You must be ready to handle this pressure and perform at the highest level that you can. By feeling good about your appearance and your relationship with others, you will feel confident that you can handle anything and everything.

5. Remember: Dress for Success, Be Professional, and Feel Good About Yourself when you step onto the court.

To Be or Not To Be
Compliments of Referee Magazine

BE APPROACHABLE

NOBODY LIKES TO BE IGNORED. One of the things that turns off coaches and players is an official who seems unapproachable, standoffish, even cold. You can be great with rules and mechanics, but if you aren't tempered with human-relations skills your career will be fraught with problems.

BE PREPARED

NO ONE SHOULD TRY TO WORK A GAME WITHOUT FIRST DISCUSSING THE GAME. No matter how long you've refereed or how many times you've worked with the same official, it's crucial to have a pregame conference before every game. Even if you've worked 20 games with your partner already this season, you've got to refresh your memory; you've got to make sure everybody on the crew feels at ease.

BE READY

AT TIMES, IT'S ROUTINE THINGS THAT CAN TRIP OFFICIALS. Concentrate at all times, because there will be times when routine duties are poorly executed. Have you doubts? Consider whether you've ever seen a football official mark off an 18-yard penalty, watched a basketball referee hand the ball to the wrong team or seen a batter go to first on ball three.

BE FOCUSED

IN ORDER TO DO A SOLID JOB, YOU MUST MAINTAIN CONCENTRATION THROUGH THICK AND THIN. To do that, you cannot allow anything to get under your skin. Some rookie officials are convinced nothing is worse than three dozen little league parents screaming at them. In fact, some pro officials agree, even after facing more than 50,000 spectators in an afternoon. Why? Because the pros learned quickly to "tune out" what the spectators have to say.

BE YOURSELF

DEVELOP YOUR SIGNALS AND MECHANICS UNTIL THAT ARE INSTINCTIVE, BUT KEEP YOU PERSONALITY INTACT. Control the game first and foremost, and administer it within the framework of the rules. Then, go out and work the game and have some fun. Keep control of the game; use preventative officiating. But, at the same time, let the players know what is going on, what you're trying to do. Talk to them. Don't just stand there during

timeouts like a toy soldier.

BE SURE

DEVELOP THE SELF-DISCIPLINE THAT PREVENTS "PHANTOM" CALLS.

Often, the best call is a good no-call. Many top officials agree their greatest fear is a phantom call at the end of a game. Every call is important, but to call something that's not there at a crucial time is devastating.

BE REALISTIC

LOOK BOTH WAYS AS YOU CLIMB THE LADDER OF SUCCESS.

Remember, if you move up too soon, you may forever eliminate the chance of another try. Your officiating friends might think you're crazy for turning down a promotion, but that's what you should do if you're really not ready to move to the next-higher level.

BE BALANCED

GAIN EXPERIENCE BY WORKING "EVERY GAME YOU CAN," BUT RECOGNIZE WHAT QUALITY OF GAMES YOU CAN WORK.

It's counterproductive to work too many games or to work games at levels which don't offer challenges. When your officiating glass is full, whatever experience you pour into it will simply spill over the top.

BE SAVVY

"SPIRIT AND INTENT" IS MORE THAN A CATCH-PHRASE, IT'S A DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE AND A WAY OF LIFE. Knowing the rules is an initial step toward becoming a capable official. The next step: Truly understanding why each rule developed and how rules interrelate. Particularly at the collegiate level, top supervisors agree they're less interested in rules knowledge than in rules understanding. If you don't see the difference, you're probably not ready to advance.

BE BETTER

COMPLACENCY CAN BE AN OFFICIAL'S WORST ENEMY. No matter what you've done lately and no matter how lofty your reputation, you must firmly believe that you can become an even better official. Set your long-term goals early. Enter each season with clearly defined intermediate goals. Work each game with a careful number of objectives in mind, aimed at helping you meet an intermediate goal. Whether it's timing, positioning, positive communication or another objective, if you don't have one tonight you're wasting a game.

BE LOUD

IF YOU SOUND OR APPEAR TIMID, YOU'LL BE PERCEIVED AS WEAK.

Cultivate your voice. It should be firm: loud enough to be heard, yet not challenging. Develop a brief list of planned statements that will convey your message without provoking anyone. Example: "Hey, I've heard enough," leaves no doubt that you do not want a conversation to continue, but it's not a threat.

BE QUIET

THE MORE YOU SAY, THE LESS IT MEANS. Rookies and veterans alike are often guilty of the "Yeah, but" syndrome. When another official or supervisor questions your mechanics or your judgment and your first utterance is, "Yeah,

but," you're usually not listening. Grandma used to say, with rolling pin hand: "Be quiet and listen. That's why you've got two ears and only one mouth." Moral of the story: You'll learn more by listening than by talking.