

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COACH AND OFFICIALS: *Mike Conlin, BOCCC Member and Assignor*

Last spring, I participated in a post season coaches meeting as the coordinator of officials. The discussion during the meeting quickly turned to coach/official communication. Coaches weren't concerned about rules or re-occurring plays that continue to be problematic. They were concerned about officials that wouldn't talk to them.

What I found most interesting is that most coaches in the room had no idea what is expected from officials from a supervisory standpoint. As someone who has/does manage officials from middle school through Division I college, here are the three main objectives of every official at any level.

1. Get plays right
2. Effectively communicate with coaches
3. Manage major moments

It is not the official's primary job to "talk to coaches". That being said, most would agree "good officials", are able to communicate effectively. When we are educating officials on communicating with coaches, we list several "keys to success".

1. Be a good listener. Listen to understand, don't listen to reply.
2. Answer questions. This sounds simple. What it means is officials don't need to respond every time the coach states or yells, "that's a foul" or "traveling". We teach officials to respond to legitimate questions.
3. Be honest. If you know you missed a play, tell the coach that. Be careful defending your position when it's possible you could be wrong.
4. Resist the urge to have the last word. Let the coach have that.

I believe there are also several "keys to success" for coaches to effectively communicate with officials.

1. PICK YOUR SPOTS - Too often coaches have something to say on every trip down the court. Coaches who do this, quickly lose credibility. Constantly complaining or "officiating" is not effectively communicating, it's just badgering.
2. MOVE ON – Once you've gotten the explanation of the play in question, move on to the next play.
3. FIGHT FAIR – Several types of unfair behaviors come to mind:
 - a. Yelling at officials from a long distance. There is no positive response from the official that's being yelled at. That official has 4 options:
 - i. Ignore the coach – negative
 - ii. Yell back at the coach – unprofessional
 - iii. Give the stop sign to the coach – negative
 - iv. Assess a Technical Foul to the coach – negative
 - b. Questioning the integrity of the officials, such as:
 - i. Stating the foul count. Stating "the fouls are 6-1" is suggesting the officials are cheating. If a team has fouled 6 times, the officials aren't to ignore continued fouls until the other team "catches up".
 - ii. Asking that the game be called "the same at both ends". That's inferring that the officials are cheating. If you have a concern that similar plays aren't being officiated the same. Ask that question.

Communication between coaches and officials is important. The responsibility is on both parties to do it effectively.

