

COMMUNICATION AND FIELD PRESENCE

Communication skills are important in all that we do as officials. Our communication must reach a broad range of audiences from players and coaches to fans and fellow officials. Top officials constantly work on their communication skills to improve their ability to receive information, understand and synthesize it and express themselves at a high level. They make excellent officials because they can translate their knowledge, skills and values in a fair and impartial way.

A great conversation with a coach walks a fine line between art and science. Getting the mix right as an official means presenting "the facts" on one hand, and carefully monitoring the signals from the coach (language, para-verbal, and non-verbal) to adjust the delivery on the other hand.

Inexperienced officials don't realize that it takes art to say simple things well. But even competent or great officials sometimes stand behind "the facts" get ahead of the communication. It is an easy trap to fall into but if you work at it, you will find that not only does it become easier, it also improves the flow and quality of the game.

Coach has control of his team throughout the week, without exception, game time, coach needs to trust that he can "transfer of power" to the officials. It is on their mind from the moment that you arrive on the field or at the school (and any history).

Communicating with the Head Coach

- Presence starts in the parking lot and locker room
- You get one chance at first impressions
- Present yourself, smile, greeting, handshake, no joking, business-like, control, focus on the game!
- Always refer to them as "Coach" or "Coach Lombardi"
- Look the coach in the eye and endeavor to build their confidence in you. Most are asking themselves, "Can I trust this guy?"
- Discuss how you're going to communicate tonight! In his office!
- Flanks develop rapport early with helpful information, penalty options, player issues (positive and negative), time-outs, clock status
- Are you approachable? Are you listening to understand? Eye contact? Are you calm? Body Language-Tone-Words! Respectful and confirming.
- Coach will almost always have the last word – **GET USED TO IT!**

Be Careful What You Say – Just looking the wrong way can set off a coach!

- Site or quote the rule but avoid over-technical speak
- Use categories of holding and DPI/OPI
- Avoid official's terms like "clean hands" or "PSK"
- Avoid our philosophy statements like "foul was not at point of attack"
- Do say, "I saw the action and it was/was not a foul."
- Don't over-use the phrase "I missed it". Your job is not to miss it.

- Do use please and thank you.
- Let the coach waive you away or disengage – don't pursue the conversation
- "I hear you coach. I understand"
- Coach, here is what was called. Coach, here is what I saw. Coach, what did you see?
- Again, coaches will almost always have the last word – **GET USED TO IT!**

Develop Rapport Early with Players and Coaches

- Pre-game introductions and pre-game warm ups
- Player issues both positive and negative
- Formation issues
- Penalty information and options
- Time-outs and clock status
- Communication Style and Personality
- Are you approachable?
- Do you verbally respond or choose to ignore?
- Good eye contact? Solid and attentive body posture?
- Do you have an even, unemotional voice demonstrating calm and control?
- Are you completely focused and attentive?
- Non-Verbal, Tone, Words – they all work together but 85% comes from non-verbal and tone!

Post-game Conversation with Crew

- What did we do well in our communication? What needs improvement?
- The whole crew should be involved and invested in their ability to communicate.
- No preaching, just good solid preparation for next week!

SIDELINE CONTROL

Since 2011, keeping the working area (six-foot white border) clear of coaches and players while the ball is in play has been a Point of Emphasis. Although some teams have made some progress, that area continues to be a Point of emphasis for 2021.

Coaches will be allowed to only step to the sideline to call offensive and defensive signals after all action has ceased. That working space (six-foot white border) is intended to allow officials to adequately perform their duties; to protect the safety of officials, players and coaches; and to allow teams to demonstrate good sportsmanship within the team area.

There is no place for the excessive demonstrations that are occurring after plays by coaches and/or players coming onto the field of play, and there is no reason anyone should be on the field even during dead-ball action unless allowed by rule, such as to attend to an injured player.

Action by coaches and team personnel have risen to the point of taunting opposing players, unacceptable verbal abuse toward officials and is not consistent with the demeanor or bench decorum that is expected in our game.