



Referee Newsletter: March 18, 2018

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Are You Kidding Me?

Bad pass, the pass was too high, bad water polo or bad defense/offense. What is your rationale or explanation for making a judgement call? Hopefully it is none of the later. Why? Because you are not making a decision on the rules as written. You are injecting your personal opinion into the game which can't be justified in the NCAA rulebook.

Coaches teach the game to their players through individual techniques and team strategies for offense and defense. The coach is the one individual that takes responsibility for how the team performs. After a game he has to ask him or herself was my coaching during the week effective? Did they perform according to how they were prepared or coached? The officials responsibility is to call the game as he or she sees the action according to the rules as written. You don't care who wins or loses, you want to be consistent from start to finish in an impartial manner.

A coach can talk to his players about bad passes, good or bad defense/offense and may even have a few words to say about the calls that officials make in the game. Usually the comments are made from his or her prospective at or near the team area much different than your positioning and or communication with your partner.

As an official you make a judgment call in a split second and hopefully from a good position seeing the initial action and reaction taking place. You make the call based on what you saw and according to the rules as written, plain and simple. If challenged you respond in rulebook terms keeping it simple. To verbally rationalize outside the written rules only creates a problematic situation and negatively affects your credibility. "It was a bad pass!" but the real question should be was a player fouled? How can you judge what is or is not a bad pass if the player can't even reach the ball because he or she is being held or impeded? If the pass is too high or off the mark and a player is not being fouled the situation takes care of itself in the end. But if the player is fouled, can't perform, and there is no call, the level of frustration and physicality will only increase.

I've heard officials say that was bad offense or bad defense but that is an opinion and should never be the basis for making or not making a call. Let the coach make those evaluations and you as an official, make the judgment calls based on the rules as written in a unbiased way.

Can Conflict Be Avoided?

Disagreement between officials and coaches is going to happen and it can surface in many different ways: incorrect calls, misinterpretation of rules, inconsistent application of the rules, coaches vested interest

in winning the game or officials who proclaim unquestioned sovereignty over the game. What, as an official, can you do to change the dynamics from mistrust, frustration and even anger when it occurs?

Words matter, using hostile language or expressing rationale beyond the written rules is simply asking for trouble. You want to choose your words carefully so not to put the coach on the defensive. "How can I help you, Coach?" might just be the least threatening phrase to avert a hostile situation. Delivery matters, too. Even the most carefully scripted delivery can elicit an unwanted response if sarcasm or an unapproachable attitude is detected. Most of all, actively listen before you speak and let him or her know through verbal and non-verbal cues. It's not easy when you have a job to do positioning to cover the pool. Always be respectful and professional in reminding the coach when there is a proper time to discuss issues.