

What makes an Excellent Official?

Beginning your Assessment

First and foremost - This is NOT a test. It is merely a self-help exercise.

To begin, I ask you to list what you consider are the TEN qualities, characteristics, or traits that you feel one must possess to become an excellent official. Remember, this is YOUR list, not someone else's.

Likewise, whatever you pick for your list will be right, since it is YOUR criteria.

Once you have compiled your list of criteria, we are now going to use them to better ourselves as officials.

The next step is to come up with at least ten **concrete** ways or methods you can demonstrate for each of your criteria. I stress "concrete", as you want to be able to track your growth and to have tangible evidence. Stay away from phrases like, "To be as good as I can", or "To study", etc.

Don't make this difficult. Many of your criteria will have the same ingredients.

An Example

Here is an example of what I have on my list:

Criterion: Professionalism

Ten Concrete ways that demonstrate the criterion:

1. Address coaches by "Coach", "Sir", or "Mr. Smith." Refrain from using first names.
2. Do not kid around with coaches prior to or during contest.
3. Arrive at pregame and dress so I am ready when pregame begins.
4. Body Language-
 - a. Walk upright at all times.
 - b. Keep hands out of pockets.
 - c. Do not congregate with other officials prior or during game without purpose.
 - d. Look at coaches, players, and other officials in the eye when talking with them.
 - e. Walk with purpose.
 - f. Collect your thoughts before speaking.
5. Participate in pregame
 - a. Offer input when appropriate.
 - b. Do not talk with others when someone else is talking.
 - c. Do not dress, shine shoes, etc., during pregame.
 - d. Ask questions which I want to have answered.
6. Do not ridicule other officials around non-officials or in forums where comments may be misconstrued.

7. Be on time.
8. Answer questions from coaches in neutral tone - be non-defensive.
9. Attend meetings and workshops when available.
10. Dress like a pro when going to the game - no sweat suits, shorts, etc.

Again, please remember that these are not the only ones. These 10 ways are mine. What becomes important is what **YOU** feel you need to do or what you want to do that demonstrates this particular criterion.

Now do this for each of your criteria.

What I decided were my 10 criteria

My Ten Criteria

As I mentioned earlier, whatever criteria you pick are right - for they are **YOUR** criteria.

And now that you have your ten criteria and your ten measurable objectives, you now have a check list.

How do we use the list?

I conduct my own Pregame - for me - by going over my list. Each season I target just two to five total items to focus on. Trying to do too much can be just as detrimental as trying to do too little or nothing at all. Remember that this skill is like many others - it will not be attained overnight nor will it be attained without hard work.

I often compare good officials to movie stars. We both languish off Broadway for years, get an opportunity, showcase our skills and suddenly we are the Toast of the Town. People forget, or don't understand, that we have spent many years laboring in youth ball, jayvee games, and high school varsity our success is not by osmosis.

I also use my check list after the game to see if I met my goals. I keep a journal, now 24 years old (God, I wish I'd had access to a computer when I started. Then I would have discs lying around my den instead of spiral notebooks!!!) In this journal, I first log the things that I wish that I had done differently... This does not necessarily mean that I think I did them wrong; I just like to look at situations.

As an example - I may have a good/bad pass interference call. I try to recall my positioning - Did I read all the keys? Was I clear in reporting my foul (did the referee have to ask me to explain or report more than once?) I read my fellow officials', players', coaches' body language when I'm processing and that indicates much to me - but that is another topic.

If during season I find that one of my objectives is being met on a regular basis, I will replace it with another to my "target group".

My "TOP TEN" List

Now that you have read this far, you probably want to know - "What does Dan have on his list?"

The following is what I have come up with for me. The order is unimportant.

- Professionalism
- Rules Knowledge
- Communication
- Poise
- Attitude

- Mechanics
- Appearance
- Alertness
- Adaptability
- Integrity

Now that I have provided you with my list, I will attempt to clarify why these particular items are important from my perspective.

We are now going to use these criteria to better ourselves as officials.

Bear in mind, this is part of a workshop and talking always seems shorter than writing.

More on Professionalism

Professionalism

This is what we should strive to become...professional. And I mean in our delivery, and not the level of ball at which we are working. We are paid for our skills and we owe it to the game to deliver the best we can.

I have never approached any game, regardless of level of competition, without the attitude that **THIS** game is the most important game of the week to the 22 kids playing. They have put their time to do their best and it is **OUR** charge to equal that.

Being professional ensures that we are unbiased and fair. It does not release us from criticism or abuse. But what it does do is weaken the base of support that those negatives rest on.

I have my detractors among coaches. Yet, as I have mentioned elsewhere, those coaches can live with me because I am professional and consistent. By being professional, it enables me to transcend petty gripes which coaches have about us.

Remember - coaches will never be our friends ... nor should they be... during a game. We two have much the same relationship as prosecuting and defense attorneys. We do not mean to be adversarial but the nature of the beast seems to dictate that is the way it is going to be.

Players, coaches, fans are going to disagree, but they are never going to be able to say that my ineptness is a result of laziness, ego, or shabby preparation.

Professionalism is my first item because I feel it is the foundation on which to I wish to build my house. My other nine criteria help me ensure that my house will withstand any calamity which may try to destroy it.

Let's continue with my list:

Rules Knowledge

Rules Knowledge

I am a firm believer that one cannot be a good official without a firm grasp of the rules. I hear many talk about "game sense", a "feel for the game", and a "common sense" approach to the game.

My concern with these officials is that, often, these are substitute phrases which translate into, "*I don't want to take the time to really learn the rules.*" Again, this is not always an absolute, but it is an observation.

Football is one of the hardest sports to officiate. Baseball has the strike zone, Basketball the charge vs. block, Volleyball over vs. under, etc. In football, we have 22 players who all have certain responsibilities and obligations at all times. "Is he set?" "Was he going forward at the snap?" "Are they in a scrimmage kick formation?" - just to cite a few of the many things we need to be thinking about.

Because of football's complexity, it is imperative that we dedicate ourselves to learning the rules of the game; not as former players, not as former coaches, not as former fans, but as **OFFICIALS**.

NUANCES

The subtle nuances are what gets us into trouble. Was the kick touched in the neutral zone by B/R on its upward flight or was the kick touched on its downward flight? - and does it make any difference? When does a player become a kicker and when does roughing merely become a personal foul? And again, does it make any difference?

We can all call Pass Interference; we may not be right, but everyone has a glimmer of an idea as to what constitutes P.I. That is easy. Our credibility is based upon our **TOTAL** performance, not just one or two obvious situations in which we have a 50-50 chance of being right.

Umpire notices that B1 is bleeding, or has blood on his uniform, and sends him off. The coach politely asks the side official if they can "buy" him back in with a time-out How can we respond in a

credible fashion if we don't know? A player/coach claims they are being "chop blocked" on the line. How can we respond if we don't know what a chop block is by **DEFINITION**?

I worked a high school championship game (each officiating position was assigned) where the umpire called a foul against K for not having enough ineligible numbers on the line. When he reported the foul, the referee and I simultaneously chimed to him, "They were in a scrimmage kick formation!" To which the umpire admitted that he was unaware of the exception rule. This in a **CHAMPIONSHIP** game!

In my mind there is no excuse for indifference or ignorance at this level of competition. I have no problem with errors or mind slippage - we all suffer from those. But to not know is inappropriate.

How many of us have hesitated, and paid the price, because of uncertainty regarding a rule?

Continue to improve

Good officials do not risk putting themselves in that position any more than necessary by constantly striving to improve their understanding and comprehension of the rules.

I never take for granted that I understand either book so much that I can relax.

Here are some of my objectives for my Rules Knowledge:

1. Strive to score no less than 90 on any tests/quizzes.
2. Read definitions every week during the season.
3. Read one rule per week during the season.
4. Write 5 questions per week - and then answer them.
5. Attend as many summer clinics/rules sessions as possible.
6. Find a "study buddy" and talk with him often.
7. Put the books away in December and pick them up again in February ... although this year I am starting in January because of a new on-line forum.
8. When answering questions cite the rule, don't go on what I "believe" to be right.
9. Don't be hesitant to seek out help from others when I am stuck...ego's need to be checked at the door!
10. Admit when wrong and learn from it.

Remember that the Rule book is our Blackstone.

I also have a personality which demands that you show me in the book why you are right.

Sometimes the books appear to be muddy, but the truth is that most of it is clear if we understand the definitions and intent of the rulesmakers. Yes, they sometimes make errors in their haste to get us information, and yes, I often disagree with interpretations which do not appear to be supported by Book.... but I will enforce as directed even if I doubt or if I do not like the interpretation or the rule.

Let's continue with my list:

Kumyuneekashun - (Communication)

Communication

This is one of our primary tools in exhibiting our professionalism and overall approach to officiating. It is important that we realize that often **how** we say something can outweigh **what** we say. By the same token, we are often scrutinized and evaluated by the messages we emit and transmit.

I define "emit" as those intangibles such as tone, body language, and word choice.

Transmit is the message which is actually sent and can be garbled by how/what we emit.

Think of your message as one being sent into space and how it can become interrupted and even bent by the effects of solar energy, physical obstructions, and weather.

Here is a classic example of interrupted or garbled transmission:

The message we often "think" we are sending is, "Coach, please help me out and keep the players in the team box". The words "*Please help*" appear to be very courteous and in the spirit of good will.

However, often there is "static" and the receiver of your words hears, "Get these players back!" Then we get the automatic, "*Just worry about the field and not the sidelines!*", or we get in response another one of my favorites - "*Great, you miss the clip and the pass interference, but you see ONE of my kids two inches over the line.*"

To maintain our goal of perceived professionalism we must rely on good COMMUNICATION skills. These skills are vital to our image as officials.

How fouls are reported

I am fairly accurate in my assessment of officials by several observations which involve COMMUNICATION.

How fouls are reported is one little detail which tells me volumes about an official.

If the official tends not to go in and get the information, it signals to me that he is not confident or that he is lazy... he wants to take short cuts. And once we learn to take a short cut in one area, we begin to take them in more and more, until we are at a point where we are merely going through the motions and not dedicating ourselves to do the best job possible. How can he relay good and accurate information if he does not know what happened?

An official who gets within five yards and then merely yells the information is setting up a wall between him and the coach. He is also indicating that he is not confident and/or is intimidated. Coaches are like piranha...they smell blood, they swarm, and then they go into a feeding frenzy.

How and what is reported?

Choice of words is important. Don't merely tell the coach that 77 committed a personal or unsportsmanlike foul...get specifics and report them. "*77 spit in 22's face.*" or "*33 is reaching*

around the waist and not letting 65 through." I know it is easier to say "we have holding", but the very little extra time that it takes to give the specifics reaps tremendous rewards.

Speak in very clear tone with no hint of emotion. No need to yell if you are right in front of the coach. Slow pattern down so as not to create a sense of panic or uncertainty.

No need to debate. Coaches disagree - hear them out, acknowledge that you have heard them, and then **move away**. Often we attempt to buy our way into the good graces of coaches by trying to prove we are right by citing book and chapter when the end result is that we bury ourselves by citing misinformation.

If the coach has more questions I offer, "Sir, I don't have time now to discuss this, but if you want to take a time out, I can certainly take more time with you." Also, if I don't know something, I will tell the coach, "Let me ask and I'll get back to you at the next natural break in the game."

How we talk to players

Another key ingredient is how we talk to the players. Remember that at every level which we officiate these young men are just that...**YOUNG**. We need to set the tone and serve as examples. If we yell at players, is it any surprise when they then yell at us?

I address all players as, "Sir", "Captain", or by number. I never call them "Son" or "Boy". Show respect and you increase your odds of getting the same in return.

Speak to them in a calm tone, which indicates that you are not emotionally involved in the events. Repeat information if you read that they do not understand what you are saying. I will add that there are times when we need to be a little authoritarian in tone, but I try to utilize that component after exhausting all others.... an exception is when there is a situation which requires more severe action; such as a fight or "dissing" going on.

Look directly at the person whom you are speaking to and also listen to them. Don't start looking for the ball or for the umpire after giving a captain his options... it gives the appearance that what the captain has to say is unimportant. We have lots of time and lots of ways to make up for lost time.

If a player comes to me and complains about something, I never tell him to have a captain take care of it. Each player should be made to feel that he will be heard. I always ask players for specifics like number, etc., and then tell him that I will watch for it.

If I warn a player about something or have called a foul on him, I make an effort to commend him for a good legal play. This signals to that player, and to the team, that I am paying attention. It also helps our COMMUNICATION lines to deal with positives as well as negatives. In short, it puts the fun back into the ball game.

Sidebar

A good umpire and a good referee can work wonders for the climate of a game, since they have the opportunity to talk with players between each snap. Don't hesitate to do preventative officiating during dead ball periods. It is amazing how much rapport an umpire and referee can build by utilizing these periods to dialogue with players.

By the same token, the side officials can work the same magic by their interactions with sidelines during these same periods. There is a major difference between having "rabbit ears" and showing teams that we are open to positive COMMUNICATION.

As a referee, I always look up to the Press Box when giving signals. I do this as I feel it is professional and that eye contact with the Box shows that I have command and presence.

With fellow officials

COMMUNICATION with my fellow officials is also imperative. When I need to ask another official for information, I do not want to give any keys that I disagree with the call or the action..... the post game is the time for that. Do not destroy your "team" by indicating dissatisfaction.

I have had occasions where I have had to enforce a judgment call which I knew to be bad, but not to do so creates more harm than good. If I use the immediate time to "teach" the official, I know that he will spend the rest of the game thinking about my action, and thus he is no longer focused on the game at hand.

NCAA - if I feel the pass may have been uncatchable I never ask the covering official, "Do you think the pass was catchable?" This sends many messages which are not helpful. One, he may be intimidated by my presence and feel that he now needs to say it was uncatchable merely because I planted the seed. Two, it can also send the signal that I disagree with the call and am challenging his ability. So instead I ask, "Did you see the pass?" This is an open question which plants no seeds and yet still gives the official an opportunity to rethink his position.

Federation is the same when the situations apply.

I have also learned that to ask a question more than once is not helpful. It only prolongs the agony and increases the chances of COMMUNICATION lines being disrupted.

COMMUNICATE as a team.

On penalties, it is never "he" (an official) had Pass Interference. Or that "we" have P.I. on 43.

What is better yet - *"There was pass interference on 43"* , or *"43 committed pass interference"*.

Signals are a very important part of our communication. Make them brisk and professional. Look at your self in the mirror as you practice signals. Crisp signals send a clear message of our attitude towards the game and ourselves as officials.

Enough pontificating.

Objectives - Here are my objectives for COMMUNICATION

Pregame -

1. Be a listener: no dressing, no side chatter - look at the person doing the talking.

Pre Kick Off -

1. Introduce myself to my sideline and shake the head coach's hand. Look him in the eye and

explain that I will be reporting all fouls to him or his appointed agent. I offer that it may take me a minute depending on game situation but that I will always get to him.

2. As the Linesman, I introduce myself to chain crew and go over my check list. Smile, be courteous, and be professional. Learn their names so I can talk to them on a personal basis if need be.

Game -

1. Address players as people... Sir, Captain, Number X
2. Use a calm tone - do not yell; go slow; shorten up the personal comfort zone.
3. Use the right words ... think before I speak
4. Get proper data from other officials before talking with captains or coach.
5. Do not get caught up in the tempo of the game... relax and work the game with the same tempo from kickoff to final whistle.
6. Step in if I feel a mistake is being made and offer my view... then withdraw without allowing my ego to get in the way of the possibility that I may be wrong.
7. Look everyone with whom I speak in the eye.
8. Record all pertinent data on my game card so that I can decipher it if needed. It is veryimportant that all officials document game situation at the end of quarters 1 and 3. Verbalize all information before proceeding with duties.
9. Work on signals... 30 minutes per week all year long.
10. Pay attention to timing device... We should all be aware of the status of clock and time. The head linesman may be the only one exempt as he does have other tasks to attend.

Let's continue with my list:

Poise

Poise

Poise, as you will see by the time this entire activity is over, is really a combination of several components of my list; but it is important enough to me to warrant its own life.

The need for poise is self-evident. To properly enforce the rules, we need to be under control to ensure that we discharge our duties in a manner which creates the most positive atmosphere possible. This is an emotional game, and we must keep our emotions in check at all times.

To me, poise is an aura which I try to project, to create an illusion that I am detached from the emotions of the game. If coaches, players, and/or other officials sense that I have lost my poise, then I lose the ability to sell myself as a professional.

I try to keep working at the same pace from opening kick off to closing whistle...even when the game heats up. I don't want to rush my ready-for-play merely because we are late in the game and a team is driving... haste can lead to disaster.

Verbal and Non-verbal Poise

Communicate with all participants in the same, calm voice, regardless of game situation. If a coach is unhappy and verbalizing his displeasure, I must allow it unless it crosses the line of sportsmanship. I am not going to personalize nor inflame the situation by yelling or trading quips with the coach or players. If I have to throw a flag, I am not going to "aggressively" throw it, nor am I going to "stare down" the coach or the player... I am a firm advocate that our body language tells volumes about us. Making a spectacle out of this situation only serves to notify the participants and the crowd that we are losing control.

Move and Signal with Poise

Poise also means that our movement on the field is with purpose and void of herky jerky actions which might indicate that we are getting caught up in the game. Do not confuse hustle with being the headless chicken running in circles before it finally rests on the ground.

Crisp signals, whether TD, incomplete pass, etc. are also good measures of our poise. Delay that signal just a count to ensure that you are calling what you have seen and then give it with authority...again, this is a case where speed can kill.

Poise under fire

Poise is also the ability to admit we are wrong. If we make a mistake and it is brought to our attention we need to correct it on the spot; don't wait to discuss it in the locker room. Taking critiques is also a measure of our poise. How many times have we discussed a situation and began to feel defensive because we don't want to appear to be wrong or uncertain. When mistakes are made, correct them and then forget them until after the game.

I once had an early whistle in a play off game. It was Very early in my career, and I was very excited about receiving this assignment. Here is the situation. I go downfield to cover eligibles, I look back and the QB throws a pass which hits the ground. I come back blowing loudly and giving the incompletion signal. The Ref, with a HUGE smile walks over and asks what I have.

I say, "An incomplete pass." He replies, "Great call - EXCEPT the pass was backwards." OOOOPS!

We replay the down, and the coach of the defensive team is all over me because his team was about to recover the ball. After the game the coach, who lost, came up to me and said, "Nice job. I thought that after the early toot I would get some pay back call. But you called them the same before and after." The rest of the crew, all very seasoned, also complimented me on the way I let it go and moved on with my game. One, a PAC 10 (PAC 8 then) and later NFL official added, "Yeah, I thought I would see deer eyes out of you the rest of the night but you held your own." Poise prevented a bad situation from becoming a terrible one.

Little Things

Paying attention to the little things. To name a few, sideline control, ball mechanics, counting players, and being aware of the time are examples of the poised official. A good way to show loss/lack of poise is to ignore these items and then brushing them off with, "Well, there not really that important." They are important or we wouldn't have them in the rules/mechanics books.

I don't know anything about basketball officiating. Recently I watched a very good football official working a college basketball game. He was clearly head and shoulders above his partners because he carried himself with poise throughout the entire contest. His tempo never changed

and he did not get caught up in the game. This is the best compliment we can give an official we are observing....to say that he looked poised and in control. We have no idea of the heat he may have felt from the game, but his demeanor was one of professionalism.

The List

So, here is my check list for Poise:

1. Don't rush signals - d e l a y and think.
2. Communicate in a calm manner the **ENTIRE** game.
3. Throw the flag deliberately but not aggressively;
 - o Higher is not better.
 - o Faster is not better.
4. Move fluidly and under control -
 - o Cut my angles at 90 degrees when coming from the sideline into the dead ball spot.
 - o Don't leave the line and then come back because I misread the play.
5. Be aware of the clock status in case there is confusion.
6. Do not yell from the field of play to the sidelines or to the crowd.
7. Jog or trot to the sidelines for discussions - don't walk. Keep my head up and maintain eye contact.
8. When I err, correct it, forget it, and move on.
9. Admit errors and don't try to excuse or justify them.
10. Keep the same pace/tempo for the **ENTIRE** game.

Let's continue with my list:

Attitude

Attitude

The second quarter is almost over which means HALFTIME is around the corner!

Attitude is another intangible which separates the wheat from the chaff. It truly regulates how we progress as officials and is part of our over all composition.

A good attitude is crucial in everything we do and is an on going process.

It begins, in officiating, with a self evaluation of why do we do what we do? My hope is that we officiate to continue to be a PART of a game which impacted us as younger people. We should not be the game. So how do we accomplish a good attitude?

About our assignments

It begins with how we approach our assignments. We must take care not to complain or gripe about getting too many youth games, too few "BIG" games, or not getting the rewards which we feel are the benchmarks of our success.

Do I always want the 1 vs. 1? You bet I do! Do I complain when I get the 2-5 team vs. the 3-4 team? NEVER! If we get caught up in rankings and other side issues we are not going to present a good attitude to the players of the teams we work. I previously stated that I have always approached every game I have worked with the same dedication, commitment, and work ethic; regardless of level or standing. Put our feelings aside and remember that we are lucky to be part of the game.

I hear officials complain about their assignments and I have noticed that those who complain the most seem to be the very officials which work the least at improving themselves.

A positive attitude means we go to our meetings and participate in a cooperative manner. Use your local options to improve your association instead of merely griping.

Always leave home without it

Check your day at the car door when you arrive at the game. The players did not cut you off in traffic, they did not get on your case at work, and they did not create the turmoil at home. Players are not idiots. They sense when we are hostile or on edge and it feeds the potential for negative situations and poor administration of the game.

Attitude also carries over into the crew you are working with that night. We all have to work with officials we do not like or do not respect. But it is imperative that we put that aside when we walk into that pregame. We are a unit and must function together, not as four individuals trying to impress someone or inflict psyche damage. If an official makes an incorrect comment we must take strides to find a neutral, non-threatening way to counter the comment. I usually take out the rule book and mention that I may be confused. I stress that it is important that WE are right as a unit and not as individuals. I work hard at not appearing condescending or intimidating when difference arise. I also will do whatever the referee asks, even if it is not the way the I would do it. Case in point, if the referee wishes to deviate from the mechanics book I will offer my opinion. If he holds firm I will cede the point and do it. I may evaluate him on this and I may discuss it with him after the game but I am not going to have a chip on my shoulder about it. I feel a positive attitude creates the best environment in which I can work.

I try not to emit an aura of "EGO" when I am the LJ working with less experienced referees. I truly don't care what position I work; I am confident of my skills and do not see this as a slap in the face. Instead I try to offer input which will help that referee become a better one. I always remember the excellent help I receive and want to pass the baton to those coming up behind me. I don't view them as the opposition taking away MY game.

When working with weaker/and or younger officials

The same applies when I am being butchered on the field. I never criticize officials during the game. I must work hard not to share or show my frustrations with weaker officials. I try to remind myself that I am not perfect and that sometimes we learn from our mistakes best when they are

approached with a positive spin rather than a negative one.

Had a game with three inexperienced officials this year. The LM ruled a fumble at the goal. When I asked him on the field he was adamant that the ball came loose prior to crossing the goal. After the game he commented, "Too bad he didn't touch the ground in the end zone or he would have scored." When I nudged him for more info he said that the runner leaped from the field of play, extended the ball across the goal and then dropped it. It was not a TD because the runner did not touch the ground before fumbling. I could have yelled at him, I could have told him it was a bad call, or many other approaches. What I decided to do was to have the entire crew research the question in the post game. My hope being that he would learn better from all of us reading it rather than my "offering an experienced opinion". A positive attitude is more conducive to growth.

Dealing with Coaches

Attitude is also important in our dealings with coaches. I know that there are coaches who shudder when they get the assignment and see my name on it. I do not allow this to influence how I will approach them. I don't brag about getting them, or putting them in their place. Now don't read that I am a perfect human being. I will joke with certain officials about the game before or after but never on game day. I shake their hand firmly, talk in a calm, deliberate manner and offer no reason for them to feel that my personal feelings will affect my judgment or decisions.

When you attend a game to watch

Watching other officials...always be careful what you say while a spectator. For a variety of reasons I am well known in our area. When I go to a game I sit as far from the crowd as possible. If I want to make a "negative" remark, I make certain that no one other than the person I am speaking to can hear me. I also never offer an opinion when asked by spectators. I remind them that we are not on the field and are not privy to what is actually going on. I don't get hooked by wanting to prove how much I know by offering information when it has no bearing on anything. What good can come from my telling those around me that the crew or the official screwed up?

Our dress and hustle

Attitude is also measured by how we arrive at the game. Cut offs, sweat suits, etc. are comfortable, but they tend to say that we are taking this game a little lax.

Attitude is not complaining about having to work the chains, not wanting to write down important information, or other common displeasures.

Attitude is observed by how we physically handle the game. If I walk in and casually drop a flag, what message am I sending? Again - one that I don't want to be there. Dead ball periods - do I joke with the crew, do I joke with chains, do I stand with hands in my pockets, arms folded, or do I stare into the crowd or at the cheer leaders? This also sends a message which I feel is negative.

I could go on infinitum, but you probably can't handle much more!

In short, we must work at our ATTITUDES so that the game is fun, fun, fun. After all, it is a game.

My Checklist for Attitude

Am I perfect? No way. I have to work hard in this area and I am not always successful. When I fail,

I note this in my log and try not to repeat the offense. Here, then, is my check list.

1. Allow travel time which will get me to the game site early enough that I am not going to be stressed by time.
2. Enter the arena professionally and greet each member of the crew with a smile and humor
3. Stop my tom foolery once the ref begins the pregame - I have a reputation for being a jokester and I must refrain from being the center of attention once we start
4. Walk onto the field with authority and precision-not a robot but as a professional-regardless of the game
5. Treat everyone positively while working the game.
6. Dead ball periods - stay alert and pay attention to my responsibilities; don't use the time to joke with the crew; don't stare upwards.
7. Don't complain about the game assignment or position
8. Cooperate with crew as a unit
 1. Don't challenge but inquire
 2. Don't argue but offer opinion and then move on
 3. Leave my ego in the car
9. Watch body language
 1. Stand at parade rest during lulls
 2. Be brisk in movements
 3. Use crisp signals
 4. Move with purpose
 5. Don't frown when upset or frustrated - stay calm
10. Remember the game is more important than I am -
 1. Don't get defensive when challenged/questioned on the field
 2. Correct my errors on the field not after the game
 3. Own up to mistakes and learn from them
 4. Don't be critical
 5. Use other's mistakes as learning tools

Let's continue with my list:

Mechanics

Mechanics

Mechanics are the most important, concrete, method of self evaluation. They also demonstrate our poise, professionalism, and commitment to the game.

Both the Federation and the NCAA have manuals which outline the best ways to ensure that we are in proper position to make the correct calls a majority of the time and to sell our judgment as sound. While there may be some minor deviations, the manuals **MUST** be adhered to if we are to adequately enforce the rules of engagement.

You have probably noticed by now that my approach to the game is much like a spider's web. I have ten points which appear separate and yet all weave together and intertwine. Many of my individual preferences overlap into several of my points.

I break mechanics into unnamed categories.

The first is working on my mechanics as outlined in the manuals. I look to the mechanics from a perspective of what will put me in the best position to rule and create a comfort zone which creates the illusion of professionalism.

My first concern is to have a good field of vision. I want to have an unobstructed view of any action which may fall into my zone.

Initial Position

As a wing official, I believe being at the sideline is the best place to start... note, I said start. This allows me to see all the action on the field without worrying about players getting behind me. It also ensures that the play is coming at me and I don't have to be preoccupied with backing up and wondering if I can run backwards and remain on my feet! Now if the ball is placed on the far hash, I may come in to the numbers but I never want to be closer than 10 yards to any player... obviously, this is not the case in NCAA as we have clear guidelines about starting on the sidelines.

As a referee, I want to set up so that I can see tackle to tackle and be on the QB's throwing arm side. I don't like to get outside the tackles because if the action rolls away from me, I am already out of the play and unable to properly see the action as it develops.

While field of vision is important, I also want to move fluidly and with purpose.

While I start on the sidelines, I want to close briskly to the end of the action AFTER the action is over. Don't be too quick to get in there as you may get caught up in a fumble, an extraordinary athletic move which keeps the runner on his feet, or miss dead ball fouls. I trail the play parallel to the sideline and then cut a 90 degree angle and move directly to the dead ball spot.

I prefer this tactic because it keeps my field of vision wide, enabling me to see more than if I am angling or sauntering. I mentioned in earlier criteria that being lackadaisical is like telling everyone I don't care.

During and After the Play

Close with your head up and on a swivel. You have the spot in your mind; but don't focus so much on that small area. I never run by players to get to a spot, because this is when we miss dead ball action away from the ball.

I have noted over the years that some officials seem to be overly close to the play. They think that close means good mechanics and hustle. I tend to subscribe to the philosophy that I want to be close enough to rule but not so close that I am in the play itself.

Trail and rule. I like to be about 5-8 yards behind the runner from the flank position. This implies that I also have read the play situation properly...pass versus run.

We all have been taught to read the tackles....if they fire out and downfield I think run; if they retreat, then I read pass. I also factor in the situation: down, distance, time, and team tendencies. When I misread, I adjust accordingly. If I read pass and they run, I allow the play to come to me. If I read run and they pass, I move my butt to get into the best position.

Goal lines... inside the 7 I begin thinking about the goal line and I move to protect it. I like to be on the goal about 2-3 yards outside the pylon, as I feel this gives me the most advantageous position to rule without being caught up in the players. Again, we should be on the goal waiting for the play, not trailing in this situation. I want to be able to see the relationship between the ball and the goal...it is the most important line we have.

Dead ball... an area in which many of us are remiss. I toss the ball underhand when relaying and I don't worry about the new ball until I am confident that all action has ceased. I also use this time to check my sidelines. I want to make certain that I have the proper room in which to work and that it is clear of everyone except those who are LEGALLY entitled to be there. I talk to coaches and then I administer warnings. My personal feeling is that officials who are lax in this area are sending a negative message. It erodes our image of professionalism and control. It's the little things which separate the good officials from the average ones. I jog to new positions, never walk. I also note the time, distance and down as I feel these items are all of our responsibilities and not left to just one official.

The ball, My whistle, and Marking the Spot

I want to be aware of the ball. Too often we pretend that we are so focused on our area that we don't know status of the ball. I want to know ball status. I may not know if there is a fumble away from me but I want to know that it is a run. Being wide gives me the advantage of more total game awareness.

Whistle control is vital. The whistle does not kill the ball, unless it is inadvertent; it merely indicates that action is now over. The rules kill the ball. Sidebar - when coaches scream that there was no whistle I ask them a simple question - "So if your player is laying on the ground and there is no whistle, it's okay for the defense punish him?" Their silence affirms that they know what is right. I seldom echo a whistle. I don't like to call what I haven't seen. You run the risk of echoing a phantom whistle from the stands and we know where that leads.

Also, don't be in a hurry to rule. I never kill the play until I see the runner down with the ball. If his back is turned, or I am screened out, I merely wait and let the action speak for itself.

Use discretion when marking the ball. I don't like to extend a foot, I prefer to indicate with upfield foot by subtly extending it no more than a foot length in front of my other foot. If the Umpire takes the spot of the other official, I gently move to echo that spot.

This offering is dryer than others, but then mechanics, after all, are mechanical!

Officials who concentrate on rules or mechanics alone will never be excellent officials. We need to emphasize both equally.

My Checklist for Mechanics

1. Maintain a good field of vision

- Start on the sideline
 - Move with control, authority, and purpose
2. Study the manual
- Two-three hours a week during season
 - One hour week during off season
 - Observe other officials to support or change my method
3. Read game situation -
- time
 - down
 - distance
 - tendencies
 - key off tackles
4. Dead Ball
- Begin on the sideline
 - Monitor my sideline -
 - Keep the sideline clear of unnecessary traffic
 - Talk with coaches requesting cooperation
 - Sideline warning -
Don't wait until the end of the fourth quarter - if they are there now, it is because I let them be there for the entire game.
 - Check down indicator
 - Move hand down indicator AFTER box has set
 - Keep eyes on field as much as possible
5. Goal line
- Start thinking about it when inside the ten
 - Move quickly to goal at snap
 - Communicate with side officials to ensure we are all on the same page.
 - Delay TD signal to allow mental process.
6. Bean bag -
- Drop it - do not toss it. We need the the yard line, not the exact spot.
7. Body language -
- Keep head up
 - Keep head on a 'swivel'
8. Be aware of the ball -
- Know if there is a pass or a run
 - Adjust when necessary
9. Whistle control
- Blow only when certain the ball is dead
 - See the ball before ruling
 - Do not echo another whistle unless it is absolutely needed.
10. Do not exaggerate movements
- Mark the spot indiscreetly

- **Adjust to the crew**

Let's continue with my list:

Appearance

Appearance

Before going into Appearance, I must address some fundamental questions about ourselves:

- Why do we want to officiate?**
- What do we hope to get out of officiating?**
- What sacrifices are we willing to make?**

Each of you must answer these questions for yourselves and my belief is that there are no incorrect responses. The reason I am raising them now is that appearance is a direct reflection of our answers to the above.

To be professional, we must look professional. This means that we may have to put aside personal biases to ensure that we meet this goal.

Instead of telling you what you need to do I am going to pose this particular item from the Advocate position.

If your goal is to officiate at levels higher than Federation, then you must begin setting the standards now. Look at officials who work the NCAA and NFL levels and ask yourselves - how do they look, and how do they differ from you?

Let's begin with the subtleties before going to the obvious.

To Beard or not to Beard

Facial hair... forget your rights as an American citizen. How many officials who are working the upper divisions wear beards, have pony tails, mutton chops, long hair? If this is where you hope to be some day, then maybe you had better take a long look in the mirror and then to the field. I go back to my earlier question, what are you willing to sacrifice to become an excellent official?

Many will argue that the above paragraph is an infringement upon rights, has no bearing on one's skills or abilities, or that it isn't legal. All strong, truthful arguments....yet it doesn't change the facts.

No group is going to say these are requirements, but there are unspoken rules by which we live. If you want to go to those levels, you must imitate the qualities/attributes which those who are there possess.

Quick analogy.... wearing a suit and tie has no bearing on the abilities of an individual; yet why do so many men "dress for success"? Because it **does** send a statement. Sure, Bill Gates can go on national television in a sweater and dockers, but note that when he appears before his Board or at the stockholders meeting, he is dressed in the finest packaging available to him. He understands the value of a strong, confident image and clothes do help sell those points.

So, let's now move to how we can attain this goal.

Looks may deceive, but your demeanor can give it away

Appearance is not just our attire, but our demeanor.

As I discussed in Poise and Attitude, **how** we do something is as crucial as what we do.

Hands in pocket is not good - it does not present us in the best light possible. When we go into the middle for discussion, keep your head up and act as if you are participating and not merely observing.

Head up at all times, this presents an image of confidence and credibility.

Now let's move to what should be, but may not be, the obvious.

It's so obvious... but why doesn't everyone do it?

Uniform is our biggest selling point.

- Are our shoes shined?
- Do we wear a sized hat - or an adjustable one?
- Do we take extra gear if we are working a double up - or do we rely on not getting dirty in our first game?
- Do we fold our gear when we pack - or do we pack like bachelors going away for a quickie?
- Is our bean bag clean - or are we still using the one we got as apprentices because it still works?
- If your state requires patches - do you attach them so they are straight or do they sag?
- Is our flag properly weighted so that it flies - instead of floats? Does our whistle shriek - or does it flutter?

Physical appearance is crucial, for it not only sends a message, but it also dictates our ability to cover the game.

Is our spare tire hanging over our belt? Did we shave and brush our teeth before the game? (Want to get even with a coach? Eat an onion before your game, and then talk face-to-face with him) How is our hair? Are we clean?

My Checklist for Appearance

So, here then is my check list:

1. Haircut monthly. Never let it get to the bottom of the ear.
2. Be well groomed and hygienic.
3. Shine shoes before every game regardless of level or field conditions.

4. Take two of **everything** to the game.
5. Check gear weekly for signs of wear/tear.
6. Wear **sized** hats and block them between useage. Buy new hats every season.
7. Replace uniform on a regular basis - check gear in May and replace any which seems over used.
8. Replace bean bags, flags, whistles every year.
9. Keep hands out of pockets, head up, eyes focused.
10. Clean and fold gear before using.

Let's continue with my list:

Alertness

Alertness

A small work with Titanic implications for we sail or sink based upon it. This area is more abstract then the others, and it is harder to express, but I will now set sail.

Good officials never hide behind position or game duties as proscribed by manual. WE ALL need to pay attention to the seemingly little details to ensure that the game is administered correctly and fairly.

In no particular order, this is what I work at in my games.

My Checklist for Alertness

1. **Clock awareness**

Whether working 4, 5, 6, or 7 man crews, we all should be aware of the time. This ensures that no one official is left on the hook if there is a discrepancy. I look at the clock while the teams are in their huddle. I also look on any signal which stops the clock. We may be a few seconds off, but it is an easier sell if we tell the coach, "Sir, we are putting 4 seconds back on because we had that as the official time." Coach may still be unhappy, but he can't really complain too vociferously if we are able to convey that WE are watching it.

2. **Substitutions**

As the flank official, I am on the sideline and make a note of players going off and coming on by number. My personal habit is to mentally say to myself, "66 and 34 out, 33 and 76 in." I repeat this several times so that I am confident of who can legally participate.

3. **Down**

We should all communicate the new down with hand signals. I move my down indicator after the ready for play. This assures me that I am on the right down. What ever system you

use keep it. Rhythm is important to making this automatic. When I am the Line Judge I assist the Linesman by checking the location and down on the box. I never let a team snap with the box on the wrong down or in the wrong location.

4. **Ball mechanics**

I don't worry about quickly getting in the new ball, but I want to make certain that the ball being brought in is a legal ball. I pay special attention in passing or kicking situations. Letting a team play with an unapproved or illegal ball may seem picky, but it provides that team with an unfair advantage and speaks volumes about our attention to detail... it is the little things which make or break us.

5. **Crew**

I like to know where my fellow officials are before I mark the ball ready for play. I never want to start with the flanks talking with the coach or a player. As a flank official, I still like to be aware so that I can prevent the Referee from prematurely winding. I want to know what spot my opposite official has so that if the umpire takes it, I can mirror it.

6. **Team tendencies**

I spend the first quarter trying to get a feel for when teams like to pass, kick, etc., so that I can properly anticipate the play.

7. **The ball in play**

Simple-> **SEE THE BALL**. I anticipate fumble on every run. I never kill the play or rule until I actually see the ball somewhere.

8. **Kicks**

I go over all the things I need to be aware of when I am the Line Judge or Linesman. Fair catch, touching, blocking, interference, etc. Once the ball has been kicked I focus on the players. They will tell you with their body language when the ball is coming down. Bouncing between Fed and NCAA I have to remind myself of kicks into the end zone and differences.

9. **Penalties**

Don't fall into the trap of believing the Referee and/or the Umpire have enforcement responsibilities. We all should know the penalty and the proper enforcement. As the Line Judge, I say to myself, "PI, 15 from the previous and automatic first down." When I have the foul I want to know the numbers involved. It isn't always possible, but I have found that I can do this 95% of the time and I'll settle for that. All I want to do is to reduce my margin of error to help sell my credibility.

I also want to see the entire play so that I know the block in the back was legal from start to finish. Alertness also helps me see any touching which may change my rulings. Is anyone else thinking, "Gee, mechanics play a big part in this?" This is why my list, for me, must be a combination of all its elements before I feel I had an 'okay' game.

10. **Field awareness**

I want to know if the goal line is a factor, if the line to gain is being threatened, if the ball is on the opposite hash, etc.

So, there is my list for alertness.

Two more to go and then your modems can take a well deserved breather.

Let's continue with my list:

Adaptability

Adaptability

This may not be on your list, and that is not a condemnation of either list, it merely reflects the differences which we all bring to the table. My hope is that we are in agreement on at least eight of the ten criteria... and don't forget to factor in semantical nuances. We may be saying the same thing but naming it differently.

Here is an explanation for why I have **ADAPTABILITY** on my list.

Football, like life, is not a venue where everything can be judged as either black or white. The rules are important, and yet, they change as the rulesmakers attempt to remedy inequities, increase safety, or keep up with the constant growths in athletic abilities.

A hold is always a hold - but do we always call it? A coach who yells and screams at us is clearly attempting to influence our decisions - but do we penalize each violator? The resounding answer is, "Of course not!" We judiciously apply the rules to keep the spirit of the game alive as well as rule applications.

Mythology - but not a myth

Those who approach life seeking a rigid doctrine by which to live often fall short of personal success and/or happiness. The same is true for officiating. Whether we like it or not, by the mere act of donning the uniform, we have accepted the challenge of having the Sight of the Delphi Oracle, the Speed of Mercury, the Grace of Venus, and the Wisdom of Athena.

This burden is thrust upon us because those who participate demand it. To be a good official, we must momentarily rise above our egos, our prejudices, our ideals and work under the guidelines specified in the manuals and books.

To be successful - we must be able to ADAPT. Like defensive players, we must be able to instantly process information, pull up the appropriate file, and react with the best possible option.

The game is over.. but the clock is still running

If the outcome of the game is in question, we must use different philosophy than if the outcome has been decided. Examples: The score is 7-6 - I am never going to let a hold, which influences the play, go undetected. The score is 45-3 - a hold which influences the play, but not the outcome, can be dealt with by talking with the player instead of the foul.

Big Dogs and Little Dogs

At the varsity level, I'm very strict with the 25 second count and motion, false start, etc. At lower levels, I allow the skills of the players to dictate how rigid I want to be.

In youth games - I learned in my first season that 8 to 10 year olds have a hard time staying in the same place for a second, much less remaining set. So I often give them much latitude in these areas. I haven't had a delay of game at the non varsity level in years - unless they clearly go beyond 45 seconds. To call these fouls at these levels deprives the players of more playing time than to merely let it go, and then to notify the coaches that they need to work on it. Players at the non varsity level are not as skilled as varsity and should not be held to the same high standards.

I will add that I try not to ignore fouls which fall into the injury producing nature. I will call the face mask, the fight, the clip, the block below the waist (in youth games, I make sure it was a block and not merely a player falling and another player falling over him). Obviously, this is done on a game by game determination. I ADAPT to the surroundings and situations.

Does the coach deserve our flag?

I have found that it is easier for me to ADAPT to the poor personal skills of most coaches than to expect them to truly act like rational adults during the heat of battle. I hold to the tenet that they are going to act like idiots and it is my responsibility to be the calm variable, which keeps the situation in check. It is as important to me as to **when** and **how** a coach criticizes me than the actual words used. I will not tolerate swearing at me, but I will often ignore swearing if not overly loud and inciting.

A coach who comes to me on the sideline and says to ME, "Goddammit Dan, you missed the clip" will receive much more leniency than the coach who yells the same message so that others may hear. A coach who during a timeout bee-lines towards me on his way to the huddle and says, "Get your damn head in the ball game", will receive a warning and a directive to proceed to his huddle, while the coach who nears his huddle and yells at me is apt to have his huddle immediately moved 15 yards from its current position.

When the coach is right

Even here, I have to ADAPT. If the coach is right, I give him a more leeway than if he is merely trying to incite. Too many officials are quick to hit a coach when he has accused them of inefficiency and the official knows the coach is right. I have to ADAPT and come up with an alternative solution. "Coach, I may have missed it. You've let me know now that is enough." Or, "Coach, you're right. I missed it and I won't miss it again. Now please direct your attention back to coaching."

Sidebar - I had a situation in a playoff game where the visiting coaches were very defensive from the pregame meeting up through the second quarter. What changed their behavior?

There was a play where the Linesman had ruled incorrectly. The coaches went ballistic and were screaming that we were homering them. I went to the sideline and asked what the problem was. They explained their view. One of the coaches said, "Why bother telling them, They aren't going to change it. They don't care." I went to the Linesman, the Umpire, and the Line Judge and asked what had happened...I truly hadn't seen the play. After getting all the information, I went to the opposing coach and told him that there had been an error. He was fine with it. I then went to the complaining coach and explained that we were going to replay the down because circumstances made that the only viable option in my mind. I reset the clock to the time the Line Judge thought it should read and we went on as if the down hadn't occurred. The visiting coach was stunned and even apologized for their prior behavior. They didn't question another call made for the remainder of the game and they eventually lost 22-21.

I truly believe that my ability to be flexible, i.e. to ADAPT, turned this into a positive situation.

WWWO - Working With Weaker (and/or less committed) Officials

There are times when I am working with officials who are not on the same level of commitment or expertise as my own, and I have found the games go much better if I ADAPT to their styles rather than imposing mine. I am not advocating allowing a misapplication of rules, but I am talking more about penalty philosophy or mechanics which they may have instead of pushing mine. My ego is not more important than the feeling that we are a crew and will work together for the duration of the contest.

If I have an inadvertent whistle, I need to accept the fact I erred and then ADAPT and move on. When I make the bad call and I realize it was a bad call, I need to ADAPT and take the appropriate steps. If the crew errs, I want to offer information which may alter the error, but there are times when I have to ADAPT by letting it go and getting back to the game.

Sidebar - I worked a game where I truly felt an official was making the wrong decision with a penalty enforcement. He ruled that the foul was a dead ball foul instead of a live ball one. I went to him and asked if he was certain that he had all the pertinent information. He held firm and I let it go....the officials directly involved ceded to the referee's ruling. I could tell it was a lost cause and moved on. I ADAPTED during the game and then discussed it with others after the game.

As in life, we as officials sometimes have to accept that there comes a time when it isn't going to be fair or right. I read the verbiage and body language of all the officials and ADAPTED to the reality that nothing was going to change and to continue to press the point would only be to serve my ego and not the flow of the game. I didn't like it at the time, I still don't like the results, but we had to move forward.

Raindrops (or snowflakes) keep falling on my head

It is important that we ADAPT to the weather. Too often, I have seen officials taken out of ball games because it was too cold or raining too hard. As much as we can prepare for bad weather, we must ADAPT and not let it influence our approach to the game. Don't stand with hands in pockets to keep them warm, don't wear towels around your necks to keep them warm, don't be reluctant to go into the middle of the field because it is muddy, and don't verbally complain about the environment.

We've all played in these conditions and we must approach this current phase of our involvement with the same enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment as we did as young men. We played in

crappy conditions out of pride and now we work in sloppy conditions for the same pride - to do the best we can at all times, so as to achieve that inner satisfaction which comes from a job well done.

Association Relations -

Often we have to ADAPT to the idiosyncrasies of our associations. Who gets moved up, who gets play offs, who gets college games, etc. Nothing good comes from whining and backroom complaining. Instead of taking potshots at those who are getting what I want, I chose to become active in my association and became one of the decision makers. I ADAPTED to the short comings which I felt were in my organization and worked towards change. I have succeeded in areas and failed in areas - and I have ADAPTED.

In short, if we can't ADAPT we can't really become successful, no matter what other rewards are tossed our way. Bad officials get play-off games, bad officials get positive recognition from a variety of sources, and bad officials even move into the upper levels of officiating.

But - good officials receive those same rewards - with added bonus of getting respect from peers, players, and coaches. I will take the respect over a play-off assignment every time.

So, there is my list for adaptability.

Okay, only one more sermon to go:

Integrity

Integrity

The final installment is short and yet deep. What is **Integrity** and how do we measure it? It is something which has to be measured from within as you are faced with various situations.

Integrity is the backbone of our chosen hobby. Without it, we are nothing, and with it, we are merely doing what should be done. It is how we approach the game, and it will be the final measuring stick by which we are truly successful or by which we are merely facades on an empty set.

It begins with how we get to our ends. Do we take advantage of opportunities or do we manipulate circumstances to arrive at a destination?

Stepping Stones

A coach approaches you and begins to criticize a fellow official. Some people might think that a good step to take now would be to offer agreement or supportive dialogue in hopes that the coach will like us and maybe request us or our crew to work future games. But what does this action say about us as an individual? To me, it speaks volumes that the official who chooses this path is willing to walk over his fellow officials to get something which is better attained through hard work and dedication.

I would choose to allow the coach to vent and then to offer him whatever procedures your association has for grievances to be addressed.

Continue Learning

Integrity also means that we truly put time into crafting our skills. We never fall back on, "I don't have time to study", "The tests are not realistic", etc. It means that we put our money where our mouths are. We asked to be part of the brotherhood and now we are obligated to take every step possible to honor those who have gone before us.

All for One, and One for Me?

Integrity means that we don't put our personal agendas ahead of the game or our associations. We don't meet in back rooms to plot and complain. We try to find avenues to express our concerns within our structures. We change them when they are for the good of all, not just the good of one.

How many people run for the Board because they believe, and in too many cases are correct, that being on the Board will lead to better games and preferential treatment? The reason to be on your Board should be to ensure that **all** members benefit.

Buddy System

Integrity means placing our friendships aside and making decisions which are fair to all and, again, not for the benefit of a few. One of our checks comes when we have to evaluate our fellow officials. There is a tendency to give our friends special ratings when they do not really deserve them. Offer help, offer guidance, offer support, but never offer false information to save a friendship, for to do so only helps to destroy the friend.

"Sorry, but thank you anyway"

Integrity is also keeping our egos in check even when it means sacrificing something we really want. Some years ago I was assigned a state play off game as an umpire. While I wanted to work the "BIG GAME", I was faced with the reality that I had never worked umpire. What to do? I called up our President and told him I could not work the game. I will admit that I was angry about being assigned out of position by the State and I expressed those feelings, but I still held that it was not fair to officials who had worked umpire and it wouldn't be fair to the participants to work the game. The President called the State and I was lucky to be able to switch with another official, an umpire, who had also been assigned out of position. I was prepared to sit home to do the "right" thing.

I also remember a play off situation where I was not assigned a game by our local assignor. I called the President to express my displeasure with the fact that other officials in our association were being assigned out of position and that I was sitting home. Two days later the assignor called me with a game - I declined. I did so because I did not want the game because I had complained; I wanted it because I had earned it. I sat home and proceeded to run for the Board. Once elected, I worked with others to ensure that clear policies were established and that no other official would ever be placed in this situation again.

I'm not saying that I was right in either case; I only mention it to offer some concrete examples of having convictions and standing by them for the betterment of the whole rather than the sole.

Officials have to be leaders, and to be a leader means that we are held, and rightfully so, to a higher standard than others.

Ethics

Integrity means that we strictly adhere to the Officials Code of Ethics. It is not enough to get by - we must live, not only up to, but beyond the smallest tenet.

If our code mandates that I call the crew, then I call them. If it requires me to be at the game 90 minutes prior to kick off, then I am there 100 minutes ahead of the game. If my code states that I am not to have a hint of alcohol on my breath, then I abstain until after the game.

Cordial but not Cozy

Integrity means that I do not frequent those watering spots where coaches go. How can I drink with them and buddy up and still believe that I can separate and maintain a neutral stance on the field? I must work to maintain my distance and, thereby, enhance my **Integrity**. I am not implying that we must be adversaries, but we must not want to be too friendly.

Officiating sometimes means having to say you're sorry

I stated in another portion that admitting our mistakes is important. I feel that it also helps our **Integrity**, for we come across as accessible, and that we are willing to admit errors without the pretense that we are gods never to be challenged.

I hope that you have found my thoughts to be of some value to you. I know that sharing them has helped me. This brings to a close the workshop material.