

BALLOT

## Elections: When and How to Hold Them

By Tom DeGraw

Ideally, you want to hold your elections when it's the most convenient for people to come to the meeting. The first

meeting of the year is usually the best attended, but it is not necessarily best suited for holding an election.

I belong to two football officiating groups. While the groups are at different stages in development, elections are coming into focus with both this year.

The high school group will be holding elections for the very first time. In the past, the organization was "owned" by several individuals who ran the group. It was decided that we will become a more traditional group with bylaws and an elected board of officials. In order to accomplish that task, we selected a number of individuals to act as a transition team for one year. The transition team was selected and made official through a vote of affirmation by the officials who make up the group.

We plan on having elections at the end of the season. That will give people time to decide how they want the group run and whom they want to run it. At some point in the season, we plan to

have a call for nominations for anyone wishing to run for a position. At the election meeting, members who are running for office will receive a short amount of time to speak on their own behalf before the ballots are cast.

We are expecting a fairly good turnout for the election since it will be the first in our history. Normally, we do not have a meeting at the end of the season, so we may find it difficult to have a large number of members present for future meetings. If that problem arises, we'll have to deal with it, because the key for holding successful elections is to have a large voter turnout.

The second group I belong to is responsible for youth football, semi-pro football and youth lacrosse. Before we added lacrosse, elections were held at the last meeting of the season. That meeting took place just before playoffs were to begin. The meeting was mandatory in order to receive a playoff assignment and was generally well attended.

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## House Cleaning: Preparing to Recruit

By Donald C. Collins



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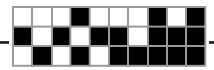
Officials associations need to take some preliminary steps to prepare for the new recruits they hope to attract. Of course, officials associations have always done the most important work — training their new officials on sports rules, mechanics and the association's policies and procedures. That training will be more effective if associations take some steps to clean house in preparation for their new recruits. Here are five house cleaning steps an association should take:

**1. Update rosters before the season starts.** Your new members need accurate

information as soon as possible. They should never encounter difficulty reaching a veteran simply because the association waited until the season was underway to update the rosters. Don't put rosters off until your first meeting, and don't wait for your veteran officials to call you. Remember that your current members are in offseason mode. It's up to the association's executive board to do the preliminary work.

**2. Prepare business training.** New officials need to understand the business

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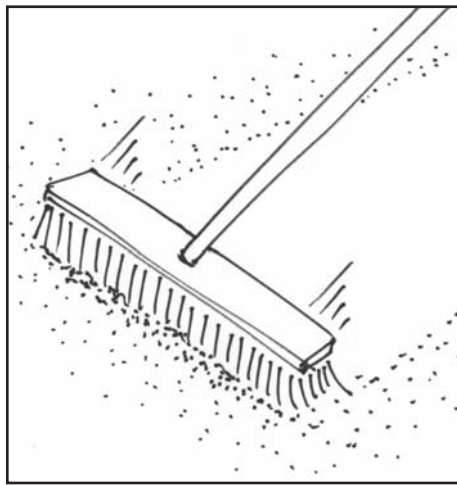
## House Cleaning (Continued from page 1)

environment they're working in. An association must give new officials training on liability and limited liability issues in case they're ever sued. Particular emphasis should be placed on having officials write game and incident reports.

Officials should also be informed of association insurance as well as their own individual insurance options. At the very least, an association should tell its new members about NASO and NFHS insurance.

Finally, new officials should be given information on tax issues and independent contractor issues. An association should at least tell officials a few basics: They are free to work when they see fit — they are not obligated to take all games offered to them; they are free to exercise their judgment as they see fit — although the association will attempt to help them improve their judgment over time; and nobody has the right to control them when they officiate a game — although they certainly will be observed and evaluated. Associations should also let new officials know that taxes will not be deducted from their pay by the association or any other entity paying them. The association should tell new officials that that generally meets the legal definition of an independent contractor and they will be treated as such.

Associations should tell their new members that their treatment as independent contractors means they will not be covered for workers' compensation or unemployment insurance. That's why they need to buy insurance through groups like NASO or NFHS. Finally, new officials should be told that they have special tax obligations. All new officials should be instructed on paying self-employment taxes; an accountant should be brought in to show the new officials how to fill out Schedule C, explain what can and cannot be deducted, and give special emphasis to frequently occurring



deductions such as the mileage deduction.

**3. Improve that website.** Recruits often have a difficult time learning who everybody is in the association; it's an intimidating process. Now, associations can scan photos of members into a website. That lets the recruits link names to faces and it lets the veterans get to know who are the recruits. Associations can also use the website to post the e-mail addresses of officers. In fact, in this day and age, an association could and probably should create a separate e-mail roster.

In addition to providing a personal connection, websites can also be used for business purposes. An association can post its constitution and bylaws online. That can be extremely helpful to new officials, as well as to veterans who seldom refer to their constitution or bylaws, and may no longer know where to find their hard copies.

Websites can even be vital tools for assigning. Indeed, associations or individual assignors can work with their member officials to create online, real-time availability schedules. The assignor using the system can simply type in a date and watch as a list of available officials pops up.

**4. Get ready to disseminate equipment information.** Contact equipment providers early and find out

who can accommodate your members. Associations need to make it easy for new officials to find their initial equipment. An association must anticipate equipment problems in advance since new members are not well-suited to solve those problems on their own.

Associations can't afford to drive new officials away by not making it easy for them to get equipment. In sports where equipment is expensive, veterans and retired officials can help new officials by donating old equipment they no longer need. Associations can also help officials in those expensive sports with equipment scholarships and advances against future game fees.

**5. Update your maps.** There's nothing worse than bad or out-of-date maps. Make sure you add new schools or new facilities to your association's map (and if your association doesn't have a map, it's time to make one). Your map should include information telling the officials where to go once they reach the site. We've all had the experience of wandering around a school trying to find the gym, locker room or swimming pool. Once we find it, we often waste valuable pregame time trying to find out where our secure changing area is located. Every association wants recruits to show initiative, but an association has a professional responsibility to give new members up-to-date and easy-to-follow information.

**Now it's showtime.** A good official always holds a pregame conference with his or her partner. The pregame conference sets the stage for the actual oncourt performance. Similarly, an association must take house cleaning steps before bringing in new recruits. Those five steps will make life easier for you and your association's recruits. (Don Collins is the commissioner of the San Francisco Section of the California Interscholastic Federation. He is a lawyer and longtime official from San Francisco.) ■