

THE PULSE

Local Association News Nationwide

South Gulf Umpire Association Officials Honored

Two umpires from the South Gulf Umpire Association (SGUA) were recognized by the Florida High School Athletic Association on June 10 as officials of the year. Larry Cutler, a nine-year veteran umpire in baseball, and Paul Thompson, a 26-year umpire in softball, received the honors for their work on the field. In addition to their umpiring achievements, Cutler has led the SGUA on its board for the past three seasons and Thompson is in charge of training new softball umpires and is a former vice president of the organization.

WVOA Hosts Inaugural All-Star Basketball Game

The inaugural Wabash Valley (Ind.) Officials Association (WVOA) All-Star basketball game took place on June 11 in Terre Haute, Ind. The game featured 40 of the best high school players around Wabash Valley, who were placed on North and South teams. Proceeds for the tournament went to the WVOA student athletic scholarship fund.

"As part of the WVOA's commitment to providing quality game officials to area high schools, the association wants to give back to the community by offering student-athletes scholarship opportunities to further their education," game director Jeff Gregg said.

New York Associations Band Together to Promote Cancer Awareness

For the second consecutive year, members of the Schenectady Baseball Umpire Association and the Eastern New York Umpires Association partnered to raise awareness for cancer and cancer research. Umpires wore pink jerseys June 16-26 in conjunction with Father's Day to promote the program and will encourage others to donate money to a cancer charity of their choice. Many of the umpires also donate a game check or a partial game check for a fund that is partially given to a cancer charity and partially used for umpires who are in need of funds because of a cancer-related hardship.

SOURCES: THE NEWS-PRESS, TRIBUNE-STAR, ESPN RADIO

on our calendar, and members can go to the calendar on our website and sign up for the tournaments that they wish to work.

NASO: Do you use assigning software?

DUCATO: We use software called Got Officials.

NASO: Is there a members' only section on your website that's password protected?

DUCATO: Yes. But anyone can get on our website. But all our game assignments are in the part that's password protected.

NASO: What is the best thing about having a website?

DUCATO: It's for our members, of course, to see our tournaments throughout the year. We have tournaments 11 months out of the year. August is the only month

that we don't have anything going on. That's probably the best thing, they can see firsthand what tournaments are going on and what training is going on. Also the ability for officials interested in joining our website as well.

NASO: Is there any downside to having a website?

DUCATO: The only thing we need to change is access to a game incident report. If one of our members throws out a coach or a player, they can go to our website and fill out a game incident report. The only thing is we found that we're having parents go onto our website and complaining. "My kid got trashed, my kid got pushed," that kind of stuff. That's the only downside that we see right now. We want to fix that so it's just members only, password protected. ☒

The Significance of a Game Report

By Donald C. Collins

Officials do not officiate in a vacuum. Our actions can trigger a series of administrative and legal ramifications. League administrators need information, and the formal way for us to provide that information is through a game report.

The game might end when we leave the courts and fields of play, but there are a number of things that occur in games that end up on league administrators' desks. The most common are ejections and fights. The individuals and teams involved in ejections and fights have a partisan stake in the incident, and an incentive to minimize or influence the consequence. League administrators need to hear from the officials; we're the neutral party. We have to give a quality report.

League administrators need to know the facts that led to an ejection or fight. They need to receive those facts in a manner that either does not open them up to attacks on the neutrality of the official or allows them to rebut such attacks. They also need to receive the facts in a manner that allows them to impose penalties or take actions with a degree of confidence that they're not going to have to reverse the penalties

because they got bad information. No league wants to suspend someone only to find out that the official's game report was inaccurate, or at the very least misleading.

A league administrator needs a game report that's just like the old "Dragnet" TV show: "Just the facts." Administrators don't need characterizations, generalized character opinions, and officials' opinions of what the penalties should be.

BYLAW BIT

Bylaws are not just for the board. Make sure your general membership receives a copy of your bylaws or has it available to review (for example, you could post it to the association website).

HOW TO...

PLAN YOUR TRAINING AGENDA

When you're planning the training agenda for your officials association, it is important to look beyond your own thoughts and ideas. The best training programs utilize the ideas of many to improve members' officiating.

Understand what your members want.

The first feedback should come from members themselves. Ask members what they liked about the previous year's training program, what they didn't like and if they have ideas to incorporate in the future. You might receive some great suggestions to incorporate. At the very least, members will feel like they are a part of the process, which is important.

Do research.

In addition to seeking suggestions from within your association, it is a good idea to network with other associations for ideas. Maybe an association in a neighboring state does a great job with training and is willing to share some ideas. You can check out what other groups are doing via their websites or contact leaders to share ideas.

Upgrade from the previous year.

Whatever you did last year to train members, plan to take the next step. Often that means incorporating more technology. Today, officials expect to learn from video plays and your group should do what it can to meet that expectation.

Get leaders to buy in.

After you gather all of your resources and information, bring together the board to make decisions regarding the training agenda. A variety of opinions will often result in variety for your training agenda, which is a positive. It will keep your members engaged.

Enlist quality trainers.

Once you have the ideas for your training program, you need to make sure you have the trainers in place in order to finalize the schedule. Again, incorporating a variety of trainers, if they are available, is a good thing.

In other words, if Red #23 uttered a profanity in challenging an official's call, the game report needs to state that. And, yes, if the player utters a profanity, you can quote it. If you don't want to seem crude, stick an asterisk in the middle of the word.

If there's a fight, give the factual details. "Red #23 and Blue #22 bumped into each other with 5:23 remaining in the first quarter. They exchanged words, and I 'T'd them' 'warned them' 'stepped between them,' etc. At the 2:22 mark, Blue #22 bumped into Red #23 and Red #23 reacted by throwing a punch, knocking Blue #22 to the floor."

Of course, the facts need to be followed by your ruling. You need to state whether you issued a technical, ejected the players for fighting, ejected players for unsportsmanlike conduct, gave a warning, restricted the players to the bench, etc.

Also, you need to provide administrative details. Presumably, you recorded your action somewhere. You may have noted it in the scorebook, told the meet referee, told the coaches, told the clerk, etc. The league administrator needs to know that, and if you failed to record it where you were supposed to, tell the administrator, because some coach, athletic director or other person not happy with the penalty eventually will.

You also need to note what you didn't see. If players came out of a dugout or off of a bench or sideline, and you don't know how many players left the bench or who they were, say so in the report. If you noticed that three players remained on the bench, indicate that.

Now, "just the facts" sounds good, but associations need to train officials that only the germane facts matter, and that facts and opinions are two distinct things. Non-germane facts make it hard to sort out what's important. Opinions may sound good to the official, but if members of the team or school being penalized see the report, they may believe the official was biased. They may have good cause if the official writes things such as, "Coach A was loud and abrasive like he always is. I swear he's the least classy coach in the league." Well, the official may think he's condemned Coach A, but if the report gets out, the league administrator will have a harder time defending his penalty because even if Coach A was ejected for kicking a chair or leaving a coaching area, he'll always be able to say that the official was out to get him.

Finally, some game reports need to be supplemented by record keeping

information. It's not enough to say that "Team A was up by 40, and team B was upset. Two team B players pushed team A players after routine plays. I decided it was best to just stop play and send everybody home."

Record keeping information needs to be precise. A league administrator needs to know whether a game was suspended, forfeited, declared a win under a mercy rule, etc. That lets the administrator know whether he or she has to make a ruling or whether the official has already made one. And record-keeping information isn't just important when a game ends early. Officials need to note time, outs and scores in situations ranging from protests to ejections to fights.

Game reports aren't limited to ejections and calls. Officials should provide reports about field and court conditions that don't stop play but may violate a rule. We've all seen basketball courts that lack proper markings, and a lot of tracks have missing marks or odd markings that don't stop play but should be remedied. Report those and the facility can fix them before there's a problem someday.

Ultimately, associations have to devote some time to teaching officials some game reporting basics because the officials' obligations don't always stop when the game is over.

Donald C. Collins is the executive director of the San Francisco Section of the California Interscholastic Federation. He is a longtime basketball official and lawyer. This article is for informational purposes and is not legal advice. ☐

NEW ADVANTAGE

Association Advantage currently has more than 1,000 members. In all, those groups represent more than 100,000 individual officials. We welcome our newest Association Advantage member associations, listed below along with home cities and contact persons:

Florida: Pinellas Area Referee Association, St. Petersburg (Siobhan Pietruszkiewicz); Quincy Officials Association, Quincy (Dante Sailor)

Massachusetts: Southern Massachusetts Baseball Umpires Association, Fairhaven (Kyle Canastra)