

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR THE LEAGUES YOU SERVICE

An officials association can maximize its effectiveness when it understands the needs of the various governing bodies that it services. At the interscholastic level, that boils down to understanding the needs of leagues and using your association to better serve the league.

Leagues deal with the familiar. The same teams play each other over and over, year after year. Familiarity and memories build up. Interpersonal relationships and personal skills are the order of the day. Leagues need their officials to meet the ideal standards of the officiating profession, but individual quirks can be accounted for and flaws can occasionally be overcome by sheer dint of personality. An official who gets good results or is accepted by those who see him or her regularly can overcome some deviations from the ideal standards – as long as those deviations are few and do not affect anything important.

The challenge for an officials association is to recruit people who have sufficient interpersonal skills to thrive in the familiar environment of a league, and mold those people into technically and mechanically proficient officials who exhibit professionalism and have good onfield judgment. The combination of interpersonal skills, technical skills, professionalism, and judgment will enable the official to maximize his or her potential, and result in the officials association successfully serving its league.

Officials who lack interpersonal skills tend to create a host of problems for leagues. League officials can end up with a series of complaints that really boil down to a general dislike of the official. Such complaints are recognized for what they are, but they do take up time. Thus, league officials benefit when an officials association either recruits people with interpersonal skills or creates a climate of professionalism so poor personalities aren't easily revealed.

Officials who have interpersonal skills and comport themselves in a professional manner, but lack top-notch officiating skills, can usually survive before the familiar audience of a league if the officials association assigns them to appropriate level games. League administrators are smart enough to know that they'll see playoff caliber officials as well as inexperienced or even lesser officials. A person with interpersonal skills or professionalism may have occasional problems where they're assigned to the wrong game or have to handle a situation that they lack the ability to deal with. However, they can generally survive in a league if their association cultivates professionalism, and makes professionalism an association-wide goal.

In short, an officials association can properly service a league by finding good people, and teaching them how to officiate with professionalism. This means that an officials association has a duty to recruit. An officials association also has a duty to create a climate where members focus on rules study, mechanics study, pre-game preparation, post-game review, punctuality, and even the proper manner in which to communicate with coaches, players and game administrators. If an association does these things, it can fulfill its obligations to leagues.