

BAD PARTNER REPORT?

By Donald C. Collins

Q My partner was responding to a fan's rant at various times during a game, even though I encouraged him to stop interacting with the fan. The angry fan ended up confronting my partner after the game and hitting him before being pulled away. What are we required to share in the game report? I want to support my fellow official, but I believe he could have helped to prevent the situation.

A An attacked official and his partners should immediately notify their assigner of the attack. Speed is of the essence here. The assigner needs quick notice. I would not think of this as a game report, but think of it as notice.

Next, the official needs to notify the police. Bring the police to the site unless safety demands that you leave. Even better, some games have police providing security. Get to them right away both for your own protection and to get the process rolling.

The police will work with the official on a police report. This police report is not a game report — although an official can submit it to assigners and league administrators. Rather, the police report is the first step of a formal process that leads to police investigation, and possible charges filed by a prosecutor.

The police report is where you set out your story when you're a crime victim. You probably won't write it yourself. Some police departments let you fill out your own police report where your report is essentially for record keeping purposes, and there are no known suspects.

That's not the case when you're attacked. Attacked officials, their partners and on-site witnesses will tell their respective stories to a police officer, who will then generate the police report.

An attacked official is really being interviewed for the police officer's report. This is best done at the game site if the official is protected from further attack since all the people involved in the game are present. But there is an element of chaos. Spectators can be interviewed at the game site. However, those spectators may not feel kindly disposed to the attacked official — especially if the game environment was hostile and the attacked official doesn't display signs of injury. This could color their interview. However, if the official waits to notify the police until the day after the incident, witnesses will be lost and it may be harder to find the suspect.

Next, the police need to know about any interaction that bears upon the attack. If the attacker threatened you last week, tell the police.

Third, don't hide the ball. Tell the truth about your actions or your partner's actions even if they weren't by the book. The law does not need you to be pure — it just needs you to be a victim. Besides, an official can't really hide his or her actions as the police will interview witnesses.

Don't think that it's enough to say the spectator in the blue cap pushed me when 20 spectators are going to acknowledge the push, but also tell the police officer that you told the attacker to get away from you and engaged in a back and forth. It's far better to give all of the facts.

The facts might be that a spectator got in your face during

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a game, said things about you and your calls, and your "back and forth" was you telling him to sit down and be quiet. Now, there's context for you telling the spectator to get away from you when he charged up to you after the game. Even if you didn't officiate by the book, you share the facts that the police need.

Next, you just have to acknowledge some legal realities. You can tell the police what happened, and still get no action. This doesn't mean that the police report is bad. It also doesn't mean that you did something wrong. You just have to remember that not all crimes get prosecuted. At worse, you can give the police report to league officials, and it will either serve as or supplement a game report.

Finally, whether you rely solely on the police report or follow up with a game report, don't worry about your officiating errors or an attacked partner's officiating errors. The attack and the details surrounding the attack deal with a crime. That outweighs trying to hide missed calls and not following officiating procedures.

A good police report is a start, but it doesn't mean that you'll get the end result you want.

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