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**Assigning Via the Web,
Is It For You? Part I**

By Nick Covella

Assigning officials to games is a constant battle for assigners. How that battle is fought has undergone changes through the years. The most notable of those changes is the introduction of the Internet. Some assigners wouldn't think of using a website with their assignments while others swear by it. If you're considering using the web for your association needs, here's some must-know information.

It's Oct. 1st. You are the assigner of a local high school basketball association. Thirty-five schools have just sent their basketball schedules for the upcoming season to you. You're staring at a list of 2,500 games.

That's fine.

You've been assigning games for 10 years using the tried and true methodology of scratching notes with paper on pencil and re-scratching notes with eraser and pencil on paper. You spend countless hours on the phone, calling officials and when not leaving messages, coordinating availability

schedules and making sure there are no conflicts between the schedules of the schools and the officials. Along the way, you spend countless more hours on the phone listening to officials complain and make excuses, probably the same complaints and excuses you've heard year after year.

That's fine.

You're an assigner and that is how it works. You'll plow forward and despite the usual amount of double-bookings,

(See "Using the Web" p.4)

**Do It Right, You'll Get Noticed
How to Keep Your Association in a Positive Light**

By Donald C. Collins

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, the state governing bodies and realizing those needs are very different.

An officials association must do more to properly meet the needs of a state governing body. State governing bodies always deal with elite games and often deal with licensing or certifying officials or officials associations. The nature of

elite games at a state level and the task of dealing with officials and officials associations from numerous sports throughout an entire state virtually ensures that a state governing body will not be dealing with familiarity.

State governing bodies need officials to come as close to meeting the ideal standards of the officiating profession as possible. Individual quirks and deviations from the standards can be tolerated, but truly are not very welcome.

(See "Get Noticed" p.2)

State governing bodies certify based upon ideal standards. There's not a lot of room to substitute "niceness" for ability. Further, state governing bodies sponsor elite contests. Those are not league contests where everybody will know each other. Quirks can't be afforded because the teams are not the same old teams that know each other and know the officials. Rather, state governing bodies are sponsoring the highest level games in a state. The official will generally be confronted with teams that have never seen the official, know nothing about the official and are in a very formal setting where there's never going to be an opportunity for the official to use his or her personality to overcome deviations from the standards of the profession.

A state governing body needs to know that an officials association is taking steps to foster professionalism among its member officials. A state governing body also needs to know that an officials association is producing officials who are technically and mechanically sound. Finally, a state governing body needs to know that an officials association has an effective evaluation system so that officials who are moved up the ladder are truly able to handle the better games they're going to find. Officials associations frequently get in trouble with state governing bodies when they confuse familiarity with technical merit and overrate a technically limited official who has managed to thrive in a league setting, but isn't truly ready to move beyond his or her familiar environs.

Occasionally, an officials association's dirty laundry gets aired before a state governing body. That is one of the worst

things that can happen, because state governing bodies are busy with their own work and don't need to get embroiled in an officials association's internal problems. An officials association can reduce the likelihood of having its problems spill over to a state governing body by making sure it supplements its evaluation procedures with due process. Officials should know how they're being evaluated and assigned. Officials should also have some ability to challenge an evaluation internally. Absent some forum for an internal hearing, officials will go outside and sue, complain, badmouth or run to leagues, schools and governing bodies with their complaints. That creates problems for everybody.

In short, the best way for an officials association to cultivate a good reputation before a state governing body is to make sure it has procedures in place that guarantee the following things: an active recruiting plan;

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ON Your Side

Legal Information at Your Fingertips

NASO-ON has provided member associations a wealth of legal information for years through articles in the *ONBoard* newsletter. Those articles were written by top authorities who specialize in officiating matters. Examples include: disciplining members, contract essentials and why your association needs a lawyer.

Through the NASO-ON website you can find — at your fingertips — a comprehensive legal index of articles published in NASO-ON's monthly newsletter dating back to 1993. ON members are encouraged to review the legal index located at www.naso-on.org/members/archive.

NASO-ON membership keeps your association up-to-date with legal essentials. □



training of the new recruits; ongoing and mandatory training of veteran officials; a required evaluation system; a mechanism that ensures that nominations to state level games are linked to evaluations; association insurance — so the association's problems don't become the state governing body's problems; mandatory member insurance — so the individual official's problems don't become the state governing body's problems; and due process — so members can resolve disputes with an officials association without dragging the state governing body into the mess. Officials associations that take those steps will be respected by state governing bodies and they'll be respected by their fellow associations. The officials associations that follow those steps are doing things the right way.

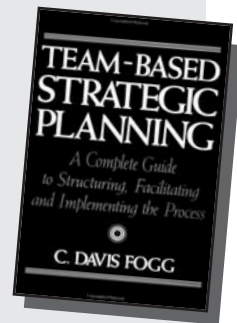
Donald C. Collins is the executive director of the San Francisco Section of the California Interscholastic Federation. He is a longtime basketball official and lawyer. □

Association Database

Being an association leader, there will be times when you will need to make changes to your group. That change within the group will take strategic planning. A highly regarded book in strategic planning is C. Davis Fogg's *Team-Based Strategic Planning: A Complete Guide to Structuring, Facilitating and Implementing the Process*. The book provides strategic planning guidance and offers techniques for how to plan in a team context.

Team-Based Strategic Planning will show you how to structure the planning process so it custom fits your needs, effectively facilitate the process (keep meetings on track, train others in planning skills, document decisions made at meetings, present and communicate plans) and use teams and teamwork smoothly and productively to create a far-reaching plan. The book also details how to implement such a plan.

The hardcover book is published by American Management Association, lists for a price of \$65 and is available at www.amazon.com. □



Have you run across a useful source of information that other organizations should know about? Send your ideas to editor@NASO-ON.org.

'All I Want to Do is Referee' By Alan Goldberger

"All we want to do is referee" is a phrase frequently heard when officials meetings turn to the topic of association business. Officials often have an adverse reaction to the "business" side of running an officials association. The proper conduct of meetings, collection of dues and assessments and the disciplining of errant members by adherence to bylaws are often viewed as outside the main focus of an officials group — to train and improve the performance of officials.

But, without proper attention to the "business" of business, officials who "just want to referee" may not be able to! If an association cannot manage its own legal affairs properly and according to the law of the place where it operates, both the association

and the officials who belong may be "out of business."

For those who don't want to know about legal requirements of managing an association, the consequences can be costly.

In truth, for many officials groups, the phrase "All we want to do is referee," really means: "All we want to do is referee *and* be officers, assigners, secretaries, commissioners or interpreters; *and* set our own criteria for membership and promotion; *and* have a major say in who is assigned to what games." In order to enjoy those "perks" of office, officials associations — and their officers — must clean their own legal house. For example, failure to maintain and enforce equitable bylaws may result in the members who are not placed in line

for choice assignments making a claim against their association that will deplete the group's resources and hamper its ability to secure leagues and conferences. And, even where game assignments are not directly at issue, litigation over wrongful expulsion or suspension of officials has torn more than one association asunder.

So, the next time you hear at a meeting: "All we want to do is referee," you know you have to set your fellow officers straight and get about the business at hand. Officiating associations can't afford to pretend they are not running a business enterprise — *unless* all they want to do is referee, for somebody else!

Alan Goldberger is an attorney and official from Clifton, N.J. □