

GNOFOA Backs Its Own

Learn How Association Supported Arrested Officials

By David Uyl

A Louisiana high school football game recently made national headlines, not for a great play or incredible finish, but because two game officials were handcuffed, arrested and taken away during the third quarter. The Oct. 11, 2013, game set forth a flurry of activity for the Greater New Orleans Football Officials Association (GNOFOA), the Louisiana High School Officials Association (LHSOA) and NASO.

Referee Jim Radcliffe and head linesman Chris Gambino were both arrested for public intimidation of a police officer. The incident started when Gambino requested assistance from a Covington police officer to help clear the sideline of unauthorized personnel. The officer, who had a son participating in the game, did not offer his assistance and, after some back and forth, the situation ended with the officer arresting both Radcliffe and Gambino. Both officials spent the night in custody.

The GNOFOA, led by president Eddie Allemore, immediately came to the defense of GNOFOA members Radcliffe and Gambino. Allemore acted as the spokesperson of behalf of the association as numerous media requests were made as a result of the story quickly becoming national news. Radcliffe and Gambino, both NASO members, along with Allemore were also in touch with the LHSOA and NASO. News releases from all parties quickly put the pressure on the city of Covington and its police department.

It was a situation that most associations will never have to deal with, at least not at that level. But other incidents may occur. The media storm that ensued is not something that associations think about, much less prepare for. The GNOFOA received a crash course in situation management over the course of a week.

Six days after the arrests, Covington

Mayor Mike Cooper held a news conference in which he publicly apologized to both officials. He also announced that he requested that all charges be dropped. District Attorney Walter Reed agreed with Cooper, and all charges were officially dropped.

Allemore said the support of NASO was paramount. "We really appreciate the support of NASO. As soon as the press release hit the NASO website, our phone started to light up. I had one crew from Mississippi offer to drive over and do our game free of charge if we needed their help. We also got calls from New York, California, Kansas, St. Louis, you name it. It was a tremendous response in support of our guys."

Radcliffe and Gambino are highly respected officials who have many years of high school football experience on their resumés. Both have worked state championship games, and each officiates

(See "GNOFOA" p.5)

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Elections – Why Voting Matters

By Matt Moore

It's barely 2014, and already a lot of people have election fatigue for who will be running to replace Barack Obama in the White House in two years.

Elections are an important part of running an association as well.

The right slate of officers can move your association forward in training, opportunities to work at more schools and working with your state office.

But the wrong officers can set your association back. If the wrong officers are only interested in benefitting themselves and not worried about the group, it could lead to people quitting your group, leaving officiating or even legal problems.

So what are the keys to running a good election? Here are several.

Find the right candidates

Whether it's through personal recruiting, self-nomination or peer review, finding the people who would be interested is critical.

"You can send in a desire to run for office or someone can nominate you," said Pamela Young, the president of the Metropolitan Officials Association, a group of 132 members based in Chicago that has officials who work football, basketball, volleyball and softball.

"We have to receive the nominations

(See "Elections" p.3)



Straight Talk: Ralph Edwards

Keys to Successful Assigning

Ralph Edwards is a high school assigner for the Central Iowa Basketball Officials Association. He assigns games for about 50 high schools. In addition, he assigns for the Iowa Women's Intercollegiate Conference (Division III). He has officiated basketball for 37 years. He currently works women's college, but he has officiated at the high school level in the past as well.

ONBoard: Do you feel like a key is being open minded as an assigner?

Edwards: Yes. What I've found is none of us are right 100 percent of the time. That athletic director and coach might be right 50 percent of what they're telling me, and the official might be right 50 percent of what they're telling me. And somewhere in between lies the truth, the real issue.

And so you have to try to figure that out and then bring them together on that and say this is why this person did what they did and you need to understand why that happened that way. So giving everybody an attempt to explain their side is huge.

ONBoard: How do you go about evaluating officials that you assign?

Edwards: I try to get out and watch as many officials as I can during the season. ... Sometimes in a given night I may be at three or four different schools depending on when their start time is, and I'll go watch a group of officials maybe for half of one game and go watch another group for half of another game. And then I try to write that up.

And I've asked other officials that work — some of our college officials that work a lot of three person basketball — I've asked them to go out and watch somebody for me and give me a report. Would you officiate with that person? Do you that they handle things OK? It helps me gain insight into as many officials as I can. I want to know are they progressing. So I evaluate that way just in person.

We don't have a formal evaluation at the high school level where we ask them to fill out a rating system on crews or on co-officials or any of that kind of thing.

ONBoard: What about at the college level?

Edwards: At the college level we do a rating, a five-question evaluation that I ask them to fill out after each game on their co-officials. So the three officials on that game will evaluate each other. Those are pretty generic. And my finding is that those evaluations are a lot of times not real critical. You don't have a real problem. Most of our officials are pretty good. To get to that level they're pretty good. So it may be little things or something that catches your eye.

But also I ask the coaches to evaluate the crew, both coaches when it's a conference game. The non-conference I ask them to evaluate our officials also. So they have an opportunity. The coaches need to take advantage to that. And I've talked to our commissioner of our league about the evaluation instrument is only as good as the coaches that fill it out. And I've asked

them to fill it out from the viewpoint of how can that official improve? What do they need to do to improve, to get better? What are things that they see?

But a lot of times, and I think most people would agree with me on this, it becomes an instrument that they become critical. Basically if they've lost the game or something didn't go just exactly the way they wanted it, becomes an instrument to point that out. And so you have to take them with a grain of salt. I tell them if you want me to have a tournament official assigned — when we get down to the conference tournament assigned to your games, you need to give me information that will help me. If you don't like the way an official works, if it's a personality thing or something like that or you think it's a skill thing or whatever, you need to let me know that, because I don't want to put somebody in a tournament situation that they don't feel comfortable with as we get down to the tournament, those games. And our league is very competitive. We have a very, very good non conference record against other schools across the Midwest, and so we're very competitive in our league. And so every game is important, and I understand that with the coaches and that's part of coaches. You want to win. You're competitive.

ONBoard: What is the most challenging aspect of being an assigner?

Edwards: One of the biggest challenges for me is getting officials — we use an assigning website both at the high school level and at the college level. And the college level officials tend to be more thorough and tend to complete their availability more. High school officials sometimes wait. And especially I do some sub varsity stuff in the Des Moines area, in the metro area, and a lot of them aren't used to using that kind of an instrument. And so I'll get into looking for officials on availability and they haven't completed the availability sheet, and I don't know if they're open or if they're not open and they're coming down on the drop down and that kind of thing. So availability is a big issue when you're really in the middle of it trying to get it done. □

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Editor:

Julie Sternberg
email: jsternberg@naso-on.org

Graphic Designer:

Rob VanKammen
email: rvankammen@naso-on.org

Contributors:

Tim Sloan, Don Collins, Patrick Rosenow, Alan Goldberger, Patrick Indivero, Lawrence Tomei, Brian Goodlander, Jerry Grunski, Bob Masucci, Todd Korth, Ken Koester, Jeffrey Stern, Matt Moore, David Uyl

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Elections Continued from page 1

by the end of August and then we hold elections at a special meeting in October.”

Follow your constitution

If your association’s governing document says that you are to elect officers on a certain schedule, make sure that is done. Failure to do that could result in someone challenging the results and leading you to have to do it all over again.

Determine how you are going to hold the election

While most associations now assign electronically, whether with ArbiterSports or another service, elections are still often done in person, but not always.

“We have a general meeting the second week in October, for the membership to hold the elections,” said Mark Bergsman, the president of the Kettering (Ohio) Umpires Association, a group of around 100 members that works baseball and softball. “Right after those elections, we generally hold the first board meeting and get going with our business.”

For John Muench, the executive director of the SEMO Football Officials Association, based in Cape Girardeau, Mo., in-person elections are a thing of the past.

“Ours are done electronically — through email — because we are so spread out geographically,” said Muench, whose group has 125 members. The association has five “local” boards and spans nearly 200 miles from north to south and 80 miles

east to west. “We don’t ever have a big general meetings.”

Muench said his group just started doing electronic voting a few years ago.

“We didn’t get all the votes back, but at a meeting you wouldn’t get everyone there anyway,” he said. “We got at least 60 to 70 percent participation and I think we’ll continue to do it.”

Bergsman liked the idea of doing things electronically, but was afraid of a side effect.

“If we did electronically, it would be more efficient for getting people involved,” he said. “But we like the idea of people being there with the candidates who can discuss pros and cons, especially if we have members who show up and aren’t familiar with people who are up for election.”

Young agreed.

“The people who are running are present and give a speech about why you should vote for them,” she said. “The personal touch would be missing from (electronic voting).”

Hold the election no matter what

If your group is happy with the status quo, there is nothing wrong with re-nominating the current office holder and moving on, but there should still be an election. That is the one time of year when the general membership can be heard and it might bring forth issues that need to be addressed.

Matt Moore is a Referee associate editor. He has been a baseball umpire for more than 25 years, mostly at the college and high school levels. □

On Your Side

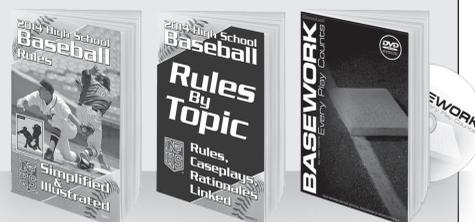
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Mentors Gain From Mentoring

By Carl Smith

Mentoring is a very important part of building any officiating association. Without proper training and mentorship, an officiating organization will stagnate, and either die away completely or cease to be effective. Younger or newer officials need to *know* that their association is backing them and doing everything it can to enhance their budding career. The process is to help the “mentees” gain experience in game management and officiating philosophy. Let’s flip the coin now, though. The mentors also gain from that relationship.

1. Giving back to the association

Sports officiating is a select fraternity. Not everyone can do it, and it’s not easy. When we started off in our career, most of us had a mentor or “big brother” who took interest in us (or pity on us) and took the big step to become involved in our development. Without that insight and experience to guide us, it would have taken much longer to advance in our chosen avocation. If left to our own devices, there’s no telling how misguided we’d have become. *All* officials can gain from the mentoring process. Not all can mentor

successfully. If you’re a good teacher or communicator, give back.

2. Relationships

The process of being a mentor brings you into the life of a new official, and over time you’ll develop a close relationship. There are quite a few officials who I’ve mentored over the past 20-plus years that still stay in touch, even though they’re no longer in the same location. You become a friend, not just a mentor. That’s a necessary part of nurturing your protégé. Those can become lifelong friendships, and that type of friendship is well worth the effort.

3. Influence

Building and expanding relationships with new officials during the mentoring process will bring a bunch of new acolytes to your “sphere of influence.” If you’re interested in becoming involved in the governing of your association, that is a good way to become known to the officials. They’ll see your hard work on their behalf, and be there to back you if you’re running for an elected board position, or want to become more involved in a specific aspect of your

association. That is *not* the main reason to get into mentoring. It is a returnable benefit.

4. Advancement in your own career

Again, that isn’t the *main* reason to be a mentor. However, it is a natural by-product. When association leaders see mentors helping new officials, and doing it with the right attitude, they’ll naturally be looking at that official when it comes to “big” games or postseason assignments.

5. Quiet pride of ownership

Mentoring is a lot like parenting. There can be struggles, depending on how stubborn your “mentee” is. As they continue to improve and advance in their assignments, you are an integral part of that advancement. When they get that “cream puff” assignment and succeed, inside you can say, “That’s *my* boy” or “That’s *my* girl.” You’ve empowered them to be all they can be. You’ve given them the necessary tools to be successful in the avocation that you also love.

Not everyone can be a good official and not everyone can be a good mentor.

(See “*Mentoring*” p.8)

8 Things Every Good Association Website Must Have

In this electronic age, the best way to inform and attract officials is with a website. But all websites are not created equal. It takes work and discipline to keep a website updated. It helps if it’s visually appealing as well, but having oodles of good information is what separates great websites from mediocre ones.

Here are some items that every good website must have.

Meeting information

The dates, times and locations of each meeting should be posted well in advance. Although in an ideal world your members should be checking the website regularly without prompting, consider sending a mass email letting them know when the dates have been posted.

If you know in advance what the discussion topic will be or who your guest speaker will be, post that as well. Minutes of past meetings and agendas of upcoming meetings should also be available.

Leaders

The names of officers should either appear on the homepage or be available by clicking on a link. If the association has its own email address, or if the officers don’t mind being contacted via their personal email or by phone, include the contact information. Either way, contact info for at least one officer should be available so interested parties can reach out when necessary.

You might also consider noting when each officer or board member’s term expires, as well as a brief résumé.

Bylaws and constitution

Assuming you have bylaws and a constitution (if you don’t, shame on you!), those documents should be available for viewing or download as a PDF. The leaders can head off a lot of questions by making it easy for members

(See “*Website*” p.8)

Now ONBoard

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

California: Southern California Rugby Referees Society, Culver City (William Caulfield)
New York: Unity in the Community Sports, Brooklyn (Johnny Reed)

GNOFOA Continued from page 1

at the collegiate level, with Radcliffe working NCAA softball and Gambino being on the football staff with the Gulf South Conference. Radcliffe also has served on the board of the GNOFOA and was recently elected the next president of the 160-member association.

According to Bryan Greenwood, LHSOA president, "Both officials have the respect of coaches, athletic directors and principals. They worked their entire careers to serve the schools of their community. Both take serious the integrity of the game and safety of the student-athletes."

Quickly after the arrests, Greenwood issued a statement supporting the officials on behalf of the LHSOA. "They absolutely will continue to work with us," Greenwood said. "They have done nothing wrong, and it is not going to affect them with our organization in any way."

NASO President Barry Mano, in his press release, said, "On October 11, two NASO members were treated in an outrageous and wholly inappropriate way by a Covington, La., police officer during a high school football playoff game in New Orleans. The GNOFOA itself is also a member of NASO-ON – NASO's Organization Network. NASO takes very strong issue with the behavior and subsequent actions of the police officer."

Many lessons can be learned from the unfortunate situation that happened in Louisiana. Associations, and association leaders, can do a few things (both before and after such an incident) to best help and support their membership. An incident that happens in the blink of an eye can lead to an instant media onslaught.

Educate and inform your membership

What happened on the football field in Louisiana can happen anywhere, in any sport, and at any level. Besides the standard rules study, basic presentations, and mechanics updates, provide your officials will suggestions on working with game personnel. Different sports have various people performing a number of duties, so having knowledge of those expectations will help your officials should things become heated.

Have a plan of action

Most associations think that such an incident, even on a smaller scale, will never happen to anyone in their group. Instead, be prepared. Actively discuss what can be done when those types of situations occur. Do you stop the game immediately? Whom should you seek out? The GNOFOA now has a plan of action in place, setting forth a policy for members to follow. Now, if one of their members asks for assistance and is met with any resistance during a game, they are advised to stop the game and find an athletic director or other game manager.

There is strength in numbers

Having the backing of their local, state and national (NASO) association certainly made the situation more manageable for the two Louisiana officials unfairly arrested. Instead of a statement from a single individual, a statement was made on their behalf from a number of respected groups. Associations need to step in to make sure that officials aren't "fighting the fight" by themselves.

Have a single spokesperson

When the media does begin to call, it is best to have a single spokesperson that can serve as the voice for the group. That allows for a consistent message to be delivered each and every time. Unfortunately, some media outlets are only looking to deliver the side of the story with the most "juice" in it that will allow them to sell their material. Having someone who recognizes that and can articulate the position of the association is beneficial.

Don't go negative

Often easier said than done. Stick to the facts when discussing details of any situation. The rumor mill often runs rampant, so take the high road and stay as positive as possible. That helps the image of both the officials involved and the association. In the Louisiana case, the GNOFOA stayed very professional in its words and actions, which cast it in a very positive public light.

David Uyl is a Referee associate editor. He worked as a minor league umpire for 10 years and has umpired Division I college baseball for three years. □

▶ How to . . .**'Referee' Meeting Arguments**

Most officials are "Type A" personalities, self-assured and set in their convictions. There will be times when even people with good intentions clash over an issue or an idea. Association leaders need to restore order and get those members back on the same page. Here are some tips.

Step 1 — Public or Private?

If it's a personality clash, it's best settled in private. No sense involving the entire association, lest members start choosing sides and turn a molehill into a mountain. Also, you don't want to use up valuable meeting and training time on something that only affects two members. Still, there are times when officiating- or association-related disagreements are best addressed by the entire group. The members may do the work for you. But be ready to step in if tempers flare.

Step 2 — Get both sides of the story.

With any luck, the whole thing boils down to a simple misunderstanding. If the problem runs deeper than that, it's important to get all the information you can. Depending on the rancor between the disputing parties, you may be able to do that at one sitting. If you have to do it separately to avoid one member interrupting the other's version of events, take the time to do it.

Step 3 — Use available resources.

If the dispute is over a rule, mechanic or officiating philosophy, the appropriate book or manual should provide the solution. Be sure to have those resources available so you can provide accurate information. If the answer isn't found in one of those books, go to a higher authority (state association, rule interpreter, etc.). Similarly, minutes from previous meetings, treasurer's reports, bylaws and constitution can be helpful in refreshing memories or clarifying points.

Step 4 — Put it to rest.

The best result is one in which everyone walks away satisfied and you look like a hero for your wisdom and problem-solving abilities. Even if the parties wind up only agreeing to disagree, that's a win. Whatever the result, work to not let the matter fester or be dredged up again. Like a judgment call in a game, what's done is done. Put it away and move on.

The Pulse

Local Association News Nationwide

EPFOA Hands Out Sportsmanship Award

The Eastern Pennsylvania Football Officials Association (EPFOA) selected Northwestern Lehigh (Pa.) High School as the recipient of its Sportsmanship Award. Northwestern received the award Nov. 14 at the EPFOA's annual banquet.

"We've known about the award for a while, but I told the guys today and they were all pretty pumped up about the honor," Josh Snyder, Northwestern Lehigh football coach, said. "We appreciate what the officials do on a nightly basis. We respect them."

NFLRA Assists School District Following Flooding

In response to the damage sustained by athletic facilities from the severe flooding last month in Colorado, the NFL Referees Association (NFLRA) announced a grant to the Estes Park School District.

NFLRA Executive Director Jim Quirk, along with the crew that worked the Oct. 27, 2013, Denver game against Washington, presented the grant to Principal Chuck Scott and Athletic Director Janet Bielmaier during pregame activities.

The crew included referee Ron Winter, Carl Paganelli, Jim Howey, Gary Arthur, Scott Steenson, Tom Hill and Greg Steed. The replay official was Jim Lapetina and the replay assistant was Jim Pearson.

Handshake Controversy in Kentucky Schools

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) had to issue a clarifying memo in October 2013 concerning its postgame handshake policy, following the release of a memo one day earlier that appeared to effectively ban postgame handshakes.

The new KHSAA memo made it clear that postgame handshakes were never banned nor were officials ever to remain after a game. The new memo made it clear that school administration is responsible at all times — including postgame — for the actions of student-athletes.

The initial memo came as a result of more than two dozen postgame situations over the past several years.

IAABO Board 4 Member Makes Hall of Fame

Longtime official Bob Plank, Sterling, Colo., is among the individuals selected for the latest class of the Colorado High School Activities Association Hall of Fame. A member of the IAABO Board Number 4 and the Colorado High School Football Officials Association Hall of Fame, Plank has officiated 32 years in football and basketball. He earned awards in basketball, including the inaugural Al Schalge Award for professionalism and service. He has called a number of championship games both basketball and football.

SOURCES: THE MORNING CALL, ASSOCIATED PRESS, KHSAA, CHSAA

Your Rights and Responsibilities

Game Reports and Liability

By Donald C. Collins

Q: Our association is going to devote part of an upcoming meeting to educating our members on how to write a proper game report. What are some liability issues that can result from improper writing/language in a game report? What advice should we give our members?

A: Game reports are like the old Dragnet television show. The official should give "just the facts." The official also should keep it simple and not offer his opinion. That is easier said than done.

There are three situations in which an official needs to produce a game report: First, a regular ejection. Second, a fight. Third, an injury.

First, for a regular ejection, the official simply needs to provide record-keeping information (the time remaining and the score), the act that led to the ejection, the fact that the official issued an ejection and any penalty administration.

Second, for a fight, the official again needs to provide record-keeping information, followed by the identity of the players who fought, a description of their actions and location on the field or court, the acts of bench personnel and the actions or inactions of the coaches. Finally, the official must note that he or she issued an ejection, note that the ejection was for fighting and describe the penalty administration. It is important to state the ejection was for fighting as penalties may be different if fighting is involved.

It's hard to write a good game report; worse, reports must be written quickly. Leagues need game reports when there are ejections or fights. They need them in time to assess league discipline and to handle school and media inquiries. This often means that a report is due either very early the next day or very late the evening or night of a game. That does not provide much time for editing. There are some associations that have a person who edits reports. However, the realities of report-writing may be better served by devoting association time to training members on report-writing.

Third, injury reports are generally file reports as an injury doesn't normally

member information [micp] consultation program

NASO members who have questions concerning situations pertaining to their officiating now have access to the Member Information and Consultation Program (MICP). MICP provides members with articles or information on specific topics. NASO can also put members in touch with an expert to discuss officiating-related information up to three times a year through MICP.

link to a league disciplinary action. Often, an injury report only exists on file in the officials' computer. The wise official will keep a record of injuries. It is not advisable for officials to submit their injury report to their league unless it is the common practice for people serving that league.

Any official who files a report should keep a copy for his or her files. Some associations will want a copy of the official's reports. That's not a problem.

Whether the official is keeping a game report or the association is keeping it, the report needs to be stored in case there's legal action. That legal action can arise from injunctions brought by players challenging league discipline to a lawsuit against an official.

I suggest that officials hold the reports until the youngest possible player turns 21 years old, and then add four years. If all the players are adults, hold the reports for four years. Now, the four-year period will vary from state to state as the age of majority and the statute of limitations can vary from state to state. It would be wise for an association to seek the advice of local counsel to get the right storage period for its state.

Officials know they live in a litigious world. Record storage is simply a modern day reality of that world.

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. □

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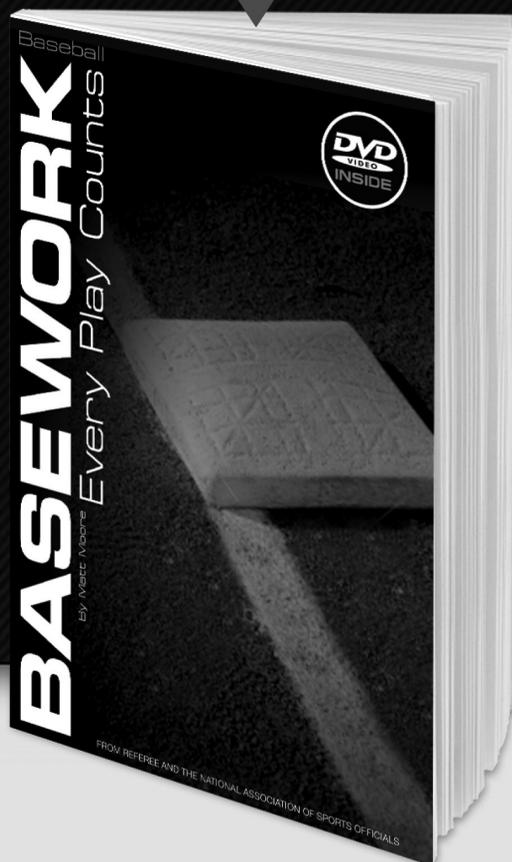
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Website Continued from page 4

to access those key files. If your bylaws and constitution are due for review, having them on the website helps the review committee.

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Educational material

Enterprising webmasters can post a quiz question of the day or week to challenge members. Some web software allows you to offer multiple choices and tabulation so you can track how many visitors answered the question correctly.

If your association trainer created a PowerPoint that was used at a meeting, make it available online. Links to video plays on sites such as YouTube can be posted as well. If you want to post video of your own, keep in mind that some material is protected by copyright and may not be legally distributed via your site.

Links

By including links to state or national associations, conferences and equipment outlets, your site makes things easy for members. If they know they can go to the website to accomplish multiple tasks, they are more likely to spend time checking out other areas of the site.

A list of schools your chapter services with links to their websites can provide members with directions and other helpful information.

News

What's new in the world of officiating? What are your members up to? Did anyone get assigned to a championship or playoff game? Keep your members informed about new interpretations, rule and mechanics changes and more through a news section.

How to become an official

In addition to current officials, prospects may drop by your page. Providing information on what steps are necessary to join the ranks may net you a new member. Include testimonials from current members so newcomers can learn about the enjoyment that can be derived from officiating. □

Mentoring Continued from page 4

If you have the ability to be a good mentor, it's your duty and privilege to be involved in that process, to pass on your experience. Sadly, there are many experienced officials who sit at home on their nights off. They no longer do it simply for the joy of officiating, or being involved in that local fraternity. They just do their games and get their paycheck. They don't share their years of experience. They live in fear that a younger official will take games that "belong" to them. Don't become *that* person.

If you're realistic, there's a natural progression to what we do, just like life. From the rookie to the veteran to the elite to the "they've lost a step but are still solid" to the lower-level schedules, it's *going to happen!* Be involved. You'll be rewarded in ways that are better than just money.

If you're in the latter stages of your career or even retired from the court or field, you can still be involved by being a mentor. You can still be very valuable to your association as a mentor and evaluator. You'll be glad you did.

Carl Smith, Anchorage, Alaska, is the treasurer and assigner for the Anchorage Sports Officials Association. □

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