

HOW TO...

GET ALONG WITH AREA ASSOCIATIONS

Around bigger cities, there are often several officials associations. Area associations can be competitive when it comes to assignments and contracts. However, there are often plenty of games to go around. For the good of members in the various associations and the officiating industry, area associations should strive to get along and even consider working together at times.

1. Keep your focus on officiating.

There is probably a reason you joined one area association over the others years ago. Maybe you didn't like the way other groups ran things or didn't get along with the personalities in other associations. Now that you are in a leadership position in the association you chose, those feelings about the other association(s) may not have changed. But that doesn't matter. Keep your focus on improving your members and improving officiating overall. Strive to set a good example for members who will likely be working with officials from other associations for various games and events.

2. Reach out after successes.

It doesn't take a lot of effort to reach out to an area association after its members have been featured in an article or the group puts on a successful camp. Whatever the achievement, think about picking up the phone and congratulating the group or its leadership. A little goodwill goes a long way.

3. Put community and charity first.

You can take the goodwill a step further by possibly participating in an event for charity if an area association asks you to support it. The group or members of the group will likely return the favor when your association does a similar community event.

4. Share educational opportunities.

Sometimes it's tough to get great speakers for your meetings because of cost. But if you join funds with area associations once or twice a year to get a quality speaker, all parties will benefit. Your members will get to hear from individuals they might never have had the chance to by joining forces. The big-name speaker may help garner some positive press for the associations that participate as well.

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manual instead of the bylaws because that allows the board to respond more quickly if something needs to be changed; bylaws are notoriously hard to change once they're established.

- Conflict of interest — Manuals can also include a conflict of interest policy, outlining how board members and members should deal with situations where personal and organizational interests collide. However, in some states,

conflict of interest policies have more legal teeth when they're tucked into the bylaws. Best to check with an attorney for the optimal location of conflict of interest language for your organization.

In fact, as with establishing your organization's bylaws, it's good to consult with an attorney to ensure everything in the policy and procedures manual complies with state and federal laws.

Brent Killackey is a Referee assistant editor and high school baseball umpire. ☐

MICP Q&A

Inspect Even if You're Late

By Donald C. Collins

Q: My partners and I arrived late to a game due to car trouble. By the time we arrived, both teams were ready to go, so we got started without our normal pregame routine of walking the field and checking for safety issues, etc. During the game, a player tripped on an obstruction and was injured. If the player sues, can we be held liable?

A: Officials have a duty to inspect the facilities prior to competition. Lateness does not relieve officials of that duty.

Officials should make it clear that they're inspecting the field when they're late. If someone is injured due to an obstruction on the field, their attorney will attempt to construe negligence from the officials' lateness. Don't leave room for doubt. Tell the coaches that the game will start after you've conducted your pregame facilities inspection.

Officials have two duties. They have an obligation to make sure the field meets the standards set out in the rulebook. And they have a duty to make sure it meets the expectations of the sports-playing community.

The law knows there are inherent risks in sport. The official is not required to eliminate those inherent risks. That's why we can play football on a wet, rutted field on an awful, frozen and snowy winter day. It's not

fun and it carries risks, but playing under those circumstances is part of the expectation of the football playing community.

The official cannot make the inherent risks in a sport worse, and must detect things that can make the risks worse. The official must use judgment. That creates the same problem that officials have with game calls. Invariably, someone will challenge the judgment. When it comes to safety, the challenge may be a lawsuit.

Field condition and field obstruction lawsuits pivot on distinctions like when the ruts in the field became too excessive or whether the official had the portable soccer post sitting on the goalline pushed back far enough. After all, football players may expect a wet, rutted, snow-covered field but they don't expect the ruts to become holes, and they don't expect to have soccer posts become a factor.

Officials cannot rely upon the facilities operator assuming legal responsibility on their behalf. The injured party will often sue everybody, and the official and facilities operator could be jointly liable. Officials also can't rely upon being left out of a suit because the facilities operator has the deep pocket. An insured official has deeper pockets than he or she realizes; they are as deep as the policy limit.

In many cases the officials and the facilities operators have the same

interest, but not always. There are some things that an official can't reasonably detect when he or she inspects a field. Some turf seam flaws are not detectable, for example. Courts may rule that is not the expectation of the sport — after all, the sports playing community can't really consent to what they can't detect. Officials may be able to escape liability in those situations because they could not have detected the problems upon

a reasonable inspection. Those losses may fall on the operator, and in those cases they may not be on the same side.

Ultimately, lateness doesn't matter. Officials must carry out their duties. *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.* ☒

+ Board Members

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success, the new board member might be turned off. Another way to engage a new member is to assign that person to one of your key operating committees. That serves two purposes: (1) it provides an opportunity to get into the operations of the association, and (2) it provides the committee a convenient two-way venue to your board of directors. You might want to think about making his or her assignment "rotational" through several committees like Finance, Resolution and Bylaws, Public Relations, Training, etc.

1. MEET YOUR NEW 'BUDDY'

Being new to a board of directors for a non-profit association can be intimidating. One of the best ways

to allay any fears or trepidations that a new member might have is to pair him or her up for a few months with a tenured board member. Your experienced member can help with assignments, help understand the historical context around discussions that might occur, and just be there to answer any questions. Like a mentor-mentee relationship, the experienced board member should be a carefully selected volunteer, and both parties share the responsibility for the winding down of the "buddy" relationship once it has achieved its purpose.

5. HOW'S IT GOIN'?

Make it a point to take a few moments after each meeting to speak to your newer members. See if they have any concerns or questions. Also ask how they thought the meeting went. Do they have any suggestions for improvement? Especially if during a meeting you sensed a distinct lack of participation or distraction, probe further. Determine if there was anything within your board's sphere of influence that might have contributed to the distraction. You want to keep your new members involved and on the edge of their seats.

Bringing new board members to the table is an exciting time for all. We should be doing all in our power to avoid anything that might squelch that excitement. The best way to ensure that is to engage your new board members as quickly as possible into your association's operations.

Bob Masucci is an official from Clinton Township, N.J., with 30 years of officiating experience. ☒

BYLAW BIT

Although it probably won't be as exciting as the next novel you are planning to read, you should take time to go through your association's bylaws. Don't depend on others to know them. When a question comes up in a meeting, be ready if members turn to you for the answer.

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