

The New Kid on the Block

By Brian Goodlander



Remember the awkwardness of being the new kid on the block? Maybe your experience was the new kid on the baseball team or the new kid in scouts or maybe you just moved into a new neighborhood and it was your first day in a new school. Maybe later in life, it was your first day at a new job or maybe you were an established sports official that has recently moved to a new city and you are going to your first meeting of your new association. All those situations can be awkward, uncomfortable and a little scary. Also, all of those situations have the same steps toward feeling comfortable in the new environment.

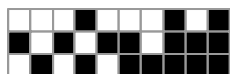
Things that make a new person feel comfortable with any organization or group are the same regardless of the nature of the group or organization. Those things include a warm, friendly atmosphere with no pre-judgments, somebody who you can trust and who you know and an acceptance of new and different ideas. Does your association have those characteristics or is it a "good old boy network?"

The environment. Often before association meetings begin there is time where members can tell war stories and catch up with friends. You can learn as much during that pre-meeting time and

(See "New Kid" p.2)

Modern Age, Modern Official

By Donald C. Collins



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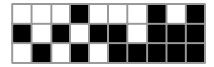
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In many parts of the country, officials no longer have to subject themselves to the whims of one association. Modern officials are incredibly mobile. In many parts of the country officials can drive through regions served by multiple associations. That couldn't be done a few years ago. Officials have taken advantage of the modern age and why shouldn't they? Yet, by taking advantage of that newfound mobility, the modern official is no longer subject to the rigors of the controls put in by many associations. Worse, member officials

who are subject to those controls see new mobile officials and wonder why they must be subject to the controls. In short, the mobility can ultimately undermine the concept of associations acting to improve the sport.

A good official can now get good games from my association and from your association. That is great for the mobile individual. It may even be great for the games that official services. However, that official is no longer accountable to anything other than his or

(See "Modern Official" p.7)



Get Free Stuff Online

In an effort to provide easy access to association management information, resources and contacts, the expanded LOAN program will be more active than ever on the Internet in 2004. In addition to the LOAN *Guide to Local Association Management*, which is already available online, here are some other new features that will be available 24/7 starting next year:

- A new website separate from the NASO site.
- Chat room.
- Bulletin board.
- Association links.
- Meeting ideas and materials.
- Association leadership tips.
- Electronic meeting materials.
- Sample documents.

Included on the LOAN website is a development template for member associations to use to develop their own websites.

Those are just a few of the exciting new benefits of the expanded program coming in 2004. If your association has ideas for the new LOAN program, we'd like to hear them. Send your ideas and comments to loan@naso.org. □



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her own pride. Thus, high school and even college officials who were disciplined on Friday by association "A" or conference "A" can go out on Saturday and work the biggest game of the year in association "B" or conference "B." If a mobile official can escape the stigma and the impact of a harsh sanction, then he or she is no longer accountable to anything other than his or her own pride. The new mobility has limited accountability and undermines the importance of associations.

Of course, for every action there's a reaction. The new mobility has led to one other unforeseen change. There are associations that feel no need to stay within geographic boundaries. Those associations raid other groups' territories, their members and even price cut. It's just a matter of time before officials associations are involved in antitrust suits. It is, after all, generally illegal to

use monopoly power in one market as a leverage to eliminate competition in a linked market. Strangely enough, legal rules designed to prevent garbage dump owners from taking over the garbage hauling business may one day prevent that powerful baseball officials association from expanding into your basketball officials' business by price cutting you.

The ultimate solution appears to be a gradual move toward centralized regulation. State governing bodies or a regional consortium of officials can regulate associations, register officials, coordinate training on a statewide basis and even create systems that add teeth to a local association's authority over a member. On the other hand, some governing bodies have gone even farther by simply seizing assigning power away from local associations, solving the associations' problems by eliminating

associations' power to assign. That new movement toward centralized regulation does solve the problems associations have regulating the new mobile official. It's too early to tell what, if any, negative effects could occur, although it is clear that if centralized regulation ever reaches a critical threshold, it could have an impact on training and fee structures.

The modern age has produced new and more mobile officials, thereby undermining the impact of association authority. That new centralization is the reaction. Officials should once again be made accountable. However, every new system produces some unforeseen reactions. Only time will tell what new problems arise as a result of the new trend toward centralization.

(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.) □