

30 Basics of Officiating

If you've officiated for any length of time, you've probably heard most of these basics of our avocation before, but they bear repeating and are great points to pass on to youth or new officials.

1. Arrive at the game site early. Never rush to a game. Allow ample time to get there well in advance of game time.
2. Park your car in a well-lit area near the building in which you dress. Try to leave sufficient space to avoid being boxed in.
3. Hold a thorough pregame conference. Do it even if you've worked with your partners before.
4. Attend to administrative duties early. Allow enough time to fix problems.
5. Dress in proper, clean uniform. Look sharp and you're off on the right foot.
6. Inspect the playing area. Correct potential hazards before the game.
7. Conduct a brief meeting with team captains or coaches. Tell the captains that they are the leaders of the team and may be called on to fulfill that role. Keep it brief.
8. Observe players during pregame practice. Opponents occasionally try to intimidate each other before a game. Nip that in the bud.
9. Examine your equipment. Blow your whistle, etc., to make sure it is in working order.
10. Relax. If you appear tense and nervous, the players will recognize it.
11. Hustle, but don't over hustle. Over hustle can be counterproductive.
12. Talk to your crewmates. Let each other know who's got what, etc.
13. Talk to the players as appropriate. Develop a good rapport by being cordial, but not overly friendly. Use your voice to make players aware that you are in the area.
14. Talk to the coaches. Keep conversations brief and to the point.
15. Keep the game moving. If you need to confer with a partner, do so, but be brief.
16. Make clear signals. All movements should be crisp and sharp without personal adaptations.
17. Never give medical aid or advice to a player. That job belongs to properly trained medical personnel.
18. Stop the game if hazardous weather approaches. Rule of thumb: If you err, err on the side of safety.

19. Keep track of major penalties, ejections. It might be helpful if a lawsuit is filed and you are named as a defendant or a witness.
20. Know where the game manager is located. In emergencies, he will need to be found quickly.
21. Leave together and without delay. There's safety in numbers.
22. Don't talk with reporters. Refer all questions to your assignor.
23. Remove your whistle. When walking through crowds, it could be hooked accidentally or grabbed intentionally.
24. Limit comment to fans. If a fan politely asks a reasonable question, answer it briefly, but be cautious.
25. Relax. Take a deep breath and gather your thoughts.
26. Review the game. Talk about any strange plays or other situations.
27. Solicit constructive criticism. Good partners will tell you what you need to work on. If asked, provide them with the same honest assessment.
28. If appropriate, thank the game manager. If he took care of you, tell him you appreciate it.
29. Leave the locker room the same way you found it. Don't force someone else to clean up your mess.
30. Walk to your automobiles together. If problems appear imminent, return to the building. Find the game manager or law enforcement authorities.