

TEN STEPS OF DECENCY TOWARD OFFICIALS

Officiating is tough work. It demands deep knowledge of the game, keen eyesight, and quick, sound decision making. But the toughest part of the job is enduring abuse from fans, coaches and players. As a result, fewer and fewer people are entering the profession. Here are 10 steps you can take to help stem this loss and create a better game climate overall:

1. Greet officials personally, if you are the host school. Do what you can to make them feel at home.
2. Introduce officials to the players and staff and, through the P.A. system, to fans. Add biographical details -- such as "Bill Davis is a veteran referee with 13 years experience and was League Referee of the Year in 2001" -- to humanize them for fans.
3. Cooperate with officials throughout the game.
4. Avoid confrontations. During a game, only request information. Never argue or become emotional with officials.
5. Don't complain about missed calls in front of your athletes.
6. Never let your players see you blame an official for a loss.
7. Be appreciative and pleasant after the game. Thank officials and make sure they have easy access to their lockers.
8. If you are unhappy about an official's performance, wait two or three days to cool off, then see if your league has an evaluation form to fill out.
9. Know the rules as well as the officials do.
10. Attend meetings of local and state officials. There they discuss the rules and how to interpret them, and you will see the game through their perspective.

Adapted from "Respecting the Ref," by Keith Mano, in *Athletic Management*, Aug/Sept 2002, p. 26.