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Intangibles of a Basketball Official

By Al Battista

Many basketball officials look at their success in the amount of games they have officiated, or post season assignments. Basically they judge their success on “trophies”. The question is are you really growing and getting better as an official. Are you a student of the game? Basketball Officiating at all levels is a “Get Better Business”. There is no finish line. See if you have these intangibles that we will discuss. When you start working on them you will be successful in your games and you will gain respect from your assignors, partners and coaches.

Humility:

Are your own worst critic? Do you omit when you miss a call ? Do you show your mistakes to other officials in tape breakdowns? Do you get defensive when an assignor or a fellow official ask you about a decision (play) that you made in a game and you know down deep in your heart you missed it. To do well in this profession you have to have the intangible of humility. Again this is a “get better business” and there is no finish line. Be your own worst critic, but not your own worst enemy.

Courage:

Do you have the courage to stand up to Coaches? Do you have the courage to call a technical foul on a Coach? Do you have the courage to call a “strength “ penalty, for example Intentional, Flagrant (NF), Flagrant 1 personal, Flagrant 2 personal(NCAA-M)Intentional or Disqualifying Foul (NCAA W), Unsportsmanlike or Disqualifying Foul(FIBA), FF1 or FF2(NBA)? Do you have the courage to call a foul out of your primary that needs to be ruled to decide a game? Do you have the courage to call up an assignor informing them that you missed a play? Do you have the courage to do something “right” for your game, even though you will not get support from your assignor?

Continued on page 2

Intangibles of a Basketball Official (continued)

Communication:

Do you communicate with your crew well:

Here are the following examples:

1. Before the game, confirming time and travel arrangements.
2. Time of Pre-Game.
3. If you are the junior official on the crew, do you contribute.

Game Situations:

1. Bonus Situations.
2. Status of Clocks.
3. Penalties.
4. Throw-In Spots. Can you run the end line.
5. Time Outs.

Help Plays:

1. Out of Bounds.
 2. Deflections on Back Court Situations.
 3. Losing your shooter or fouler, especially if there is no monitor.
 4. Successful and non-successful baskets.
- Awarding of goals.

Discipline:

1. Head Coaches being unsportsmanlike. Do you handle it; or do you appease or avoid? This could be a warning, an informal warning, or a technical foul.

Heat of Moment :

1. Do you deflect or defuse?
2. Do you keep your game moving?

Team Driven:

1. Do you really believe in Game, Partners, Self.
2. Do you care about your crew by picking them up when needed.
3. Do you let "newer" officials officiate in their primary.
4. When you talk about "decisions" (plays) do you start with your self.
5. When preparing for the game, do you think of your crew?

Assertive:

1. Are you assertive in your primary. In other words do you own it?
2. Do you throw "strikes" in your secondary.

Avoidance:

1. When a Coach or player is challenging you and do you ignore or avoid?

Accountable:

1. Do you get back to assignors and officials with a call, text or email in a timely manner?
2. Do you get your paper work in on time?
3. Do you keep your availability up to date?
4. Do you meet your partner(s) on time when traveling?
5. Do you get to your assignments early?
6. Do you work every possession hard?
7. Do you work every game hard, regardless of the level?

Firmness :

1. When a Coach or player challenges you, are you firm, tactful and exude confidence and show strength; or do you appease, avoid or "cave", or are you "cocky".

Unnecessary:

1. Do you have any unnecessary whistles. For example, calling contact that is incidental a foul.
2. Learning to take a "hit" for the game. For example, ruling a "3" second violation on a team that is down by 35 points with 20 seconds left to go in regulation. This is where you have to Awareness.

Appease:

1. Do you appease a Coach, when they are on your partner and you don't support them. For example, putting your arms on the Coach.

Awareness:

1. Team Fouls.
2. Penalties.
3. Time Outs.
4. Substitutions.
5. Personality of Game.
6. Clock(s)
7. Hard Fouls
8. 1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3.

Game Management:

1. Penalties.
2. Clock(s)
3. Substitutions.
4. Match-UPs.
5. Voices of Reason

Control of Game:

1. Disruptive Coaches.
2. Disruptive Players.
3. Engaged Match-UPs.

Do you run the game? Or does the game run you?