

Mid-Season Officiating Notes

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The season is almost half over, and this is a good time to review your procedures and mechanics. If necessary, you should make mid-course corrections now. Focus on practicing correct techniques for the remainder of the season so they become second nature. You should be working to improve something during every match you officiate.

There have been three updates on the hair adornments (beads and clips) ruling. The MPSSAA volleyball ruling was simply extended to all sports in the third update. If you feel it is dangerous to the person or the persons around a player wearing hair adornments, mention of it to the coach and they will take it from there.

Always try to perform as a team. Do not create conflict as you are working. We are many personalities and skill levels and need to adapt to each other, as well as the many volunteers who help us as line judges and scorers. You don't have to agree with what your partner is doing, but you do need to support them. In the debrief after the match is over, which are not optional, the tone should be positive. We are not there to demean each other but to fix errors that may have occurred so we can learn from them and be better in the future. Please do not get defensive and argumentative. Just because you have been doing this for 20 years doesn't make you a better official than someone who has only been refereeing for a short time. Sometimes less experienced officials have less to fix than those that have been doing the same incorrect procedure for a while. Techniques change over time and a professional official tries to stay current with the techniques specified in the Official's Manual and Casebook.

Examples for self-reflection:

The substitution signal has changed. How many "old timers" are still using open hands instead of fists to make this signal? It is just a little thing, but it has changed, and we need to move on with it.

Are you using the correct procedures to end a timeout? This procedure has been in place for a number of years, and we still run into people doing whatever they feel like. Hint: a timeout always ends with a warning whistle and a horn but not necessarily at the same time. Don't be in a rush to end the time out. Make sure that all parties on both sides of the net are ready to play before you direct the horn to sound. That means 6 players on each side are present and not talking to coaches or having a huddle. This is their time, let them have it.

How many R1s are blowing the whistle when the ball crosses outside the antenna or makes contact with the pole on the R2's side of the court because we are used to working alone or with new official? Give

your R2 a chance to do their job. If the R2 does not end the rally, then it is perfectly acceptable to whistle the fault.

Most R1s and R2s use correct mechanics when the R1 initiates the fault. But many are incorrect when the R2 initiates. As an example, when the R2 whistles a net fault, the R2 must move to the fault side, show the net fault signal and show the number of the player in the net. Mirror the R1 awarding the point. Don't lead the R1. The number is shown across the court to the R1, not toward the coaches and bench. If the coach asks, just tell them the number of the player at fault. As the R1, all we do is award the point and show the number of the player so the bench can see it. How many R1s still make the net fault signal?

Remember, the R1 is in charge of ball handling unless it is out of view of the official. R2s should only be providing discrete ball handling assistance when the player has their back to the R1. The time to discuss ball handling is during post-match. Both officials should be open to the possibility that they are too loose or too tight in their judgement.

R2s should help with balls down as we see them with the correct signal.

The net and center line is the responsibility of the R2. Make sure you stay focused here until everyone is clear from both sides, and then find the ball. As an R2, you should rarely see the first contact whether it be a ball down or a first touch unless it is a slow-moving free ball. If it is a hard hit shot and you are seeing the first contact, you are probably not watching the action at the net. It makes the job of the R1 a lot harder if they have to watch the net contacts and follow the ball to see contacts there as well. R2s must discipline their eyes to not follow the ball until responsibilities at the net are complete.

A number is not required for a center line fault. The R2 should just the signal with a single finger pointing to the centerline then mirror the R1 awarding the point.

The "discreet" help R2s offer the R1 should be in front of us in the shoulder region, not below waist level. A lift, double contact, 4th contact, set point, back row fault all should be shown at shoulder height. A slight nod of the head is generally taken to mean keep playing, because there is no fault. This communication should be discussed in pre-match briefings. When the play is over and whistled, the signals should be up high where everybody can see them. We are not hiding anything at this point.

R2s must pay attention to the benches in between points while the ball is not in play. This is your domain, and you need to take care of it. Note when a sub comes up to enter the set. Note the libero replacements. Make it a point of pride to never miss a timeout request from a coach.

When telling the coaches about substitutions and time outs, we always tell them how many they have used, not what they have left. You must tell the coach when 15, 16, 17 and 18 substitutions have been used.

R1's do not signal discretely (unless you are signaling to the R2 about a position fault before the serve). If you are making a signal, it is big where everyone can see.

R1s do not signal set points.

R1s do not signal how many time outs have been used at the start of the time out, only at the end following the R2s lead.

Do not wave to the captain. Just nod your head in acknowledgment when introduced in the lineup check to start the set.

These all may just sound like little things, and they are, but together they add up to so much more. Proper and consistent mechanics and techniques provide assurance to all participants that the contest will be officiated fairly. Near the end of a long tiring match, the last thing your partner needs is to waste mental energy figuring out the idiosyncratic techniques you are using. There are guidelines in the Officials Manual for most of the items discussed in this article. Strive to be the official who is reliable, predictable and a pleasure to work with. It will take you far

