

Ten Non-Rule Lessons I have learned in my 50 years

1. Lacrosse is a small world, so there is a possibility you know the coach's first name and this may not be the first time you have officiated one of his games. Nevertheless, to set the roles right, I always **address him as "coach."**
2. Same with players, in high school, I do not introduce myself by my first name. I am not the player's friend, I am their referee for the day and **the title of Mr. seems especially appropriate when addressing teenagers.** I suspect most to do not call their parents by their first name. Yet, I do allow "Alexa" to use my first name.
3. One of my favorite past NCAA championship officials said, "Silence can never be misquoted," yet the current NCAA editor of the rule book, says he always hated it when he was ignored. That having been said, **try to respond to the head coach's questions and not his comments** at the appropriate time. Sometimes comments like e.g., "I hear you coach," or "You make a point," or "I'll watch for that may be disarming enough.
4. Be secure enough in yourself to avoid confrontation. Right or wrong when a coach is on your case, can you rotate to the other side of the field at the next faceoff or timeout? You have nothing to prove. Basketball mechanics call for the official calling the foul to rotate to the other side of the floor, why can't we employ that mechanic when it is everyone's best interest to do so. **Sometimes moving out from in front of his bench can disarm the situation** and maintain the focus on the game and not the personalities.
5. **The calls you pass on are just as important as those you call.** The higher up you go, the fewer the calls the game calls for. The players and fans are not there to see you know the rules, but a good referee knows how to apply them. I once read that officiating is like art and referee is like a painter who starts with a blank canvas and brings his expertise to allow the players to complete the painting.

6. Now this next one may be somewhat controversial, but when is a technical a technical? Answer: when the offense creates a disadvantage is the undisputable first part of the answer, but the second part involves discretion and philosophy. Is it possible that the player was disadvantaged, but 30 a second foul really doesn't fit the crime? Where do you find in the rule book to simply award possession to a player who was already in possession when he was disadvantaged? Nowhere. But do your best to judge the impact of the foul. In a recent game I saw two instances of experienced officials who avoided giving time for what I call the "cheap technical." In one case, the player in possession had just crossed midfield near the far sideline when he seemed to stumble over the defender's stick and lost the ball out of bounds. In the other case, the long pole had just retrieved a loose ball in front of his goalie's cage when a slight nudge from the rear caused him to lose the ball. Could you give a loose ball hold call on the faceoff instead of a 1 minute trip on a player who is moving away from his goal, which is 50 yards up field? In all cases, a quick whistle followed by a quick restart by the offended player will result in resumption of play. I understand **avoiding the "cheap technical"** is not within the written rule, but well within its spirit.
7. When there is an injured player, calmly walk away from the scene. Understand, whether you missed a possible call, or no call was warranted, any coach is upset to lose a player and may be inclined to make a comment. If you are not in the immediate vicinity, it is harder for him to engage you in conversation, possibly making a disgruntled comment. You are less likely to have to use your authority to settle a no-win situation. You maintain your cool and save the coach from possibly losing another player for the next minute. I once remember my son saying, "His dad could beat you up, to which I responded, "Yes, but I can run faster."
8. After the game, take your self-congratulatory comments with your partner to the parking lot. Someone just lost and someone's Mom is not happy. You know if you did a good job today and if you were not at the top of your game, you and your partner can discuss the game

and lessons learned off the field. No need to supervise the hand shake nor congratulate the coaches. The less you are visible, the less you are remembered, the better!

9. Don't be too proud to **accept and seek feedback**. No one is perfect and if you don't learn from every game at every level, it is time to give it up. Be humble enough to recognize you are human and no one is ever officiated a perfect game. Sometimes it might be advice which is hard to hear but the other guys in stripes are your only fans and the best to learn from!

10. Be confident and if not fake it. There is perceived credibility in coming across like you believe in yourself and your call. The things you say to yourself before and during the game is a part of the game no one sees except in your performance. You are there not just because you believe in yourself, but someone else does also to assign you in that game at that moment in time with those two teams. I close with a saying from the Apostle Paul in Romans when he writes, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, rather think of yourself with sober judgment..." During a competitive tense moment in the game, saying to yourself, " I am good at this, I can handle this" is part of the game no one ever sees unless you don't employ **positive self-talk before, during and even after the game!**