

# ***INTRODUCTION TO UMPIRING***

## **CURRICULUM GUIDE**



**by Tim Litfin**



# 2017 Umpire Clinic – Sunday April 30

Group Conversations (20 minutes):

1. Preparation – we over prepare so we do not under perform
2. Strive for perfection, accept excellence! Visualize success.
3. ABC's. Always Behave Confidently!
4. Rules. Schedule. Equipment. Appearance. Angle and distance!
5. Making the call
  - a. Pause – Read – React
  - b. Balls / Strikes Mechanics
  - c. Out / Safe Mechanics
  - d. Fair / Foul Ball Mechanics

**Nick Litfin**

6<sup>th</sup> year

**Jim Larson**

10th year

**Tim Litfin**

36th year

- Each veteran covers each skill set below.

First Rotation – 10 minutes....

- Pre-Game Conference
- Home plate mechanics and position
- Position for plays in the infield
- How to signal the count
- Calling balls and strikes
- Removing your mask

Second Rotation – 10-15 minutes...

- Between inning position
- Moving out from behind home plate
- Coach / Bench Behavior. Bench, Equipment, Uniform – stay after the teams to clean it up
- Batter's Box Issues: Foul tip, Foul/Fair ball off of the batter, catcher, umpire, bases, player, foul line
- Position for an umpire on a play on the bases....and a play at the plate

Third Rotation – 10-15 minutes...

- Dedicated time working the plate and calling balls and strikes....

Fourth Rotation – All Umpires are back together in a big group.....15 minutes...

- Nick - Infield Fly Rule
- Jim - Awarded Bases (One from the mound, two from the field)
- Tim - Interference & Obstruction
- Nick - Timing Play – When a run counts / does not count
- Jim - Appeals (Live Ball / Dead Ball)
- Tim - Runner is out when
- Tim - Batter is out when

Situations – Live Action. You Make the Call!

- First, Second and Third Base
- Plays at the Plate

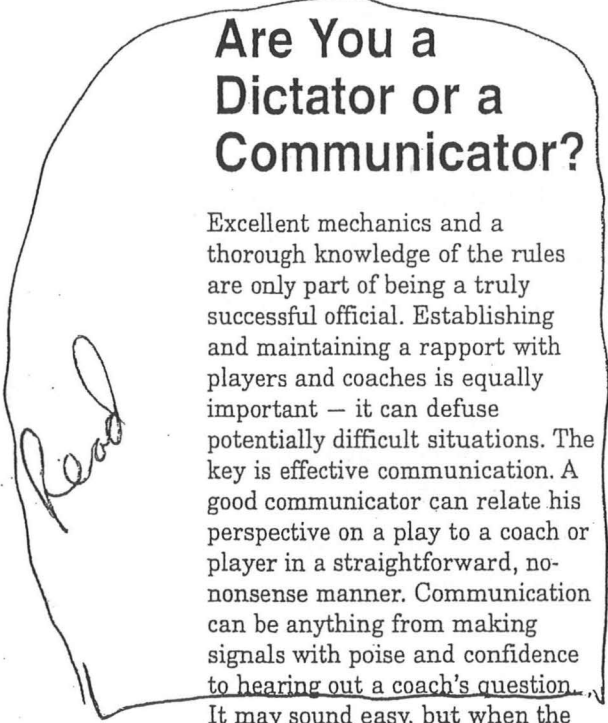
Thank you! You Provide Valuable Leadership and Community Service. Well done!



# X<sub>s</sub> & O<sub>s</sub>

GET GAME READY

## Are You a Dictator or a Communicator?



Excellent mechanics and a thorough knowledge of the rules are only part of being a truly successful official. Establishing and maintaining a rapport with players and coaches is equally important — it can defuse potentially difficult situations. The key is effective communication. A good communicator can relate his perspective on a play to a coach or player in a straightforward, no-nonsense manner. Communication can be anything from making signals with poise and confidence to hearing out a coach's question.

It may sound easy, but when the lines of communication are impeded by highly charged emotions and a generally negative societal attitude towards sports officials, effective communication can fall apart. Still, communication can make the difference between a game that is bogged down in penalties and shouting matches with coaches, and a game that runs smoothly and showcases athletes' talents.

It's inevitable. Sooner or later you have to deal with an irate coach or player screaming at you. What do you do? There's the coach, questioning your ability to officiate in a loud, boisterous manner. The whole time you can't help but wonder, "What does he know about officiating, much less the specific rules of the game?"

No matter how tempting or satisfying it might seem, a referee should never fight fire with fire by barking back. If you don't like to be shouted at, don't shout at someone else. Be firm but with a normal, relaxed voice. That technique will do wonders in helping you reduce the pressure of the situation. Shouting indicates a loss of control — not only of one's self, but also the game.

Maintaining an even keel in emotionally charged situations takes patience and self control. Don't obviously threaten a coach or player. Threats will only put them on the defensive and lead them to believe you have it out for their team. All "if-then" statements should be avoided. For example, a coach is continuously haranguing you from the sidelines. Fed up, you finally walk over and in a fit of anger you tell him, "Coach if you say one more word then I will kick you out of the game," to which he responds, "OK. I'm sorry." Now you're really in a pickle. He apologized but in doing so said not just one word, but three. You now have one of two choices which the coach has determined for you — accept his apology and not follow through with your threat, or kick him out even though he apologized. Either way you lose.

If you feel a situation is serious enough to warrant a threat, then it is serious enough to penalize without invoking a threat. Obviously, some things you say will be a form of a threat, but using the proper words can make it more subtle. For example, instead of saying, "One more word out of you and you're gone," you can say, "Coach, I've heard enough. Let's play the game."

Taking criticism from coaches, players and fans is just one part of a tough job. Have your head on right. Don't think your striped shirt grants you immunity from having to take a little criticism. It's part of officiating. Plan on it.

The good officials can decipher between stupid comments made by unknowledgeable sources and comments that have legitimate value. Consider the coach who offers you "sage" advice on officiating at the end of a game in which his team lost by a narrow margin. Chances are his comments are colored by his emotions and should be regarded as unreliable. On the other hand, if a coach approaches you and calmly

questions a specific rules interpretation, hear him out. Communication breakdowns often originate from a basic misunderstanding of the rules. When both official and coach work off the same page, potentially explosive situations are less likely to occur.

When a coach or player has a legitimate question about a call, it's important not to interpret it as a question of your personal judgment or ability to officiate. It could be the coach simply doesn't understand that particular rule. By taking the time to explain it to him instead of ignoring his questions, you clear up his confusion and defuse a potential time bomb. Treat coaches and players in a courteous way. If they ask you a question reasonably, answer them in a polite manner. If they ask to question something and then start telling you off, interrupt and remind them of the reason for the discussion. Be firm, but relaxed.

When dealing with a difficult coach, sometimes all that is required is a little common sense. If a coach is on your back but not enough to warrant a penalty, then stay away from him. That is especially true during timeouts or injuries. There is no reason to stand within ear shot of a coach who is intent on worrying more about your job than his own. Standing near an unhappy coach just to spite him will only lead to further tensions.

As for the fans, you can forget them. As a group, fans usually exhibit three characteristics: ignorance of the rules, highly emotional partisanship and delight in antagonizing the officials. Accepting that fact will help you ignore the fans, unless they interrupt the game or stand in the way of you doing your job.

— Written by Richard Schafer

## *Mechanics - The how and where of umpiring*

1. **The Safe Call:** From a set position, arms at sides and knees slightly bent. Arms up to shoulder height and move arms from in front of body to the side. The voice of "Safe" coincides with the arm movement. Also, use this for a "No-Catch" call.
2. **Out / Strike Call:** From a set position, raise right hand as if to shake hands and continue upward, and now the elbow out to the side to form a right angle with closed fist. Coordinate voice of either strike, or out, with the closing of the fist.
3. **Foul Ball Call:** From a set position, straddling an imaginary foul line, raise both hands above your head, yell "Foul" and then point foul with both arms.
4. **Time Call:** Raise both hands above your head, and say "Time" nice and loud.
5. **Fair Ball Signal:** From a set position, straddling the foul line, point in to fair ground with the inside arm. No voice is used for a fair ball call. Move out from behind the plate on line drives, or fly balls down the line.
6. **Don't Pitch:** Right arm straight out toward the pitcher, parallel to the ground and fingers pointed up, as you push your hand to the pitcher. This is used for batter time to get set in the box. When ready, verbalize "play" and point with one finger to the pitcher that you are ready.

### **TIMING:**

One of the keys to making the correct call is timing. Most umpires timing is too quick. Slow down and delay your call. This will do several things for you:

1. It will help relax you before you make your call.
2. It allows you to track the pitch better.
3. It takes the pressure off of you for having to make a decision immediately.
4. It gives you a half a second to review the play in your mind if you are in doubt.
5. If the ball was dropped, you will not risk an embarrassing moment.

The concept is to delay and make sure of your call.

### **The One Umpire System:**

You will need to hustle because you make every call.

1. Always come out from behind the catcher on the third base side and then move from there.
2. Hustle, hustle, hustle.
3. The best position is usually near the middle of the field, watch the ball and let it lead you to the play.
4. If there is a potential play at the plate, do not go into the middle of the infield but stay in the foul ground on the third base side of the plate.
5. Take your eye off the ball only momentarily to glance at any runners touching the bases.

## Concentration

1. You must keep your head in the game and be thinking the entire time. Umpiring is a thinking activity.
2. Total focus on the game is also necessary to be able to block out and ignore remarks from the spectators.
3. If you are having a tough game or just had a controversial call, you have to discipline yourself to forget the last call and focus on the present.
4. The time to relax is between innings. Make sure you use that time to relax - you need it.

## Instinct

An umpire is like a judge. He/she examines the facts and makes a decision. Many times that decision is a matter of instinct. When you attend a game or play in a game, spend some time watching the umpires.

## Attitude

- > Professionalism must prevail.
- > Be business like.
- > Respect fans, teams and coaches.
- > You are there to take charge of a game and to control it.  
You are not there to be overbearing or dictatorial.
- > Umpiring is a people business. Good human relations skills and common sense can be your best friends.
- > Generally speaking the biggest mistake umpires can make is talking too much.
- > Umpires are there to do the job and for the most part, not be seen. There will be plenty of times when trouble will find you - you do not need to look for it by being a screamer or smart aleck.



### Body Language

1. Keep your head up.
2. Look the manager/player in the eye when talking to them.
3. Control your hands.
4. Never hang your head.
5. Stand vertical, not leaning.

### Pre-Game Activities

1. Arrive at the game site at least 15 minutes prior.
2. Stretch out your muscles, you will do some running.
3. Talk to the coaches to iron out any ground rules.
4. Inspect the field, looking for rocks, holes, safety hazards, etc.

### Game Time

Work with the coaches to have the game start on time. Therefore, you can not arrive at game time.

### Points of Emphasis

1. Enforce rules consistently. Umpires are not authorized to create new rules, nor are they authorized to choose which rules they will enforce.
2. Umpires work for the benefit of the players and the sport.
3. When a runner slides, he/she must slide in a direct line between the 2 bases. He/she may run in a direction away from the fielder to avoid contact.
4. Wear your umpires shirt!

## The Pre-game Conference

*"Make it a Ceremony!"*

You should arrive to the game site 15 minutes prior to the games starting time. Your first order of business is to get your equipment from the Brook Peterson Park attendant. If you are umpiring in St. Boni. or Bayview, allow extra travel time.

Then go to the field and do the following.....

> Hurry the coaches along, in a pleasant way so that the game actually starts @ the exact time posted.

> At 5 minutes prior to game-time gather both coaches to the home plate area. At this time the players should be off the field. With the coaches you discuss the following:



> Home team? Flip a coin or an indicator if there are 2 Waconia teams. *Home team is listed on Arbiter*

> Helmets and bats are kept behind the fence.

> Batters & runners wear helmets at all times.

> Catchers wear masks while warming up pitchers.

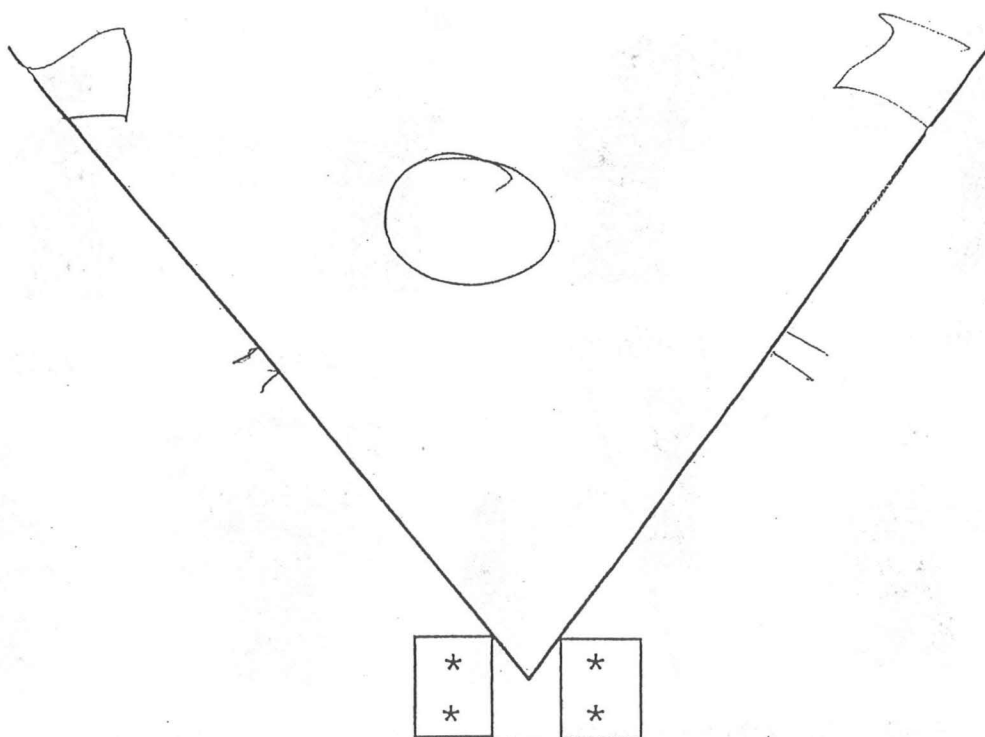
> Hurry your players on and off to allow for more playing time.

> Your position for this conference is per the diagram on the next page.

> When the game is over simply deliver your equipment to the attendant on duty. If the attendant has gone home, bring equip. to the CE office the next day, unless you umpire again the very next night - then just keep it. We do not have enough equipment to give every umpire his/her own set.

> Have fun!

# Pre Game Conference Umpire & Coach Position



Umpire

\* = Coaches Position

During this time, all players are to be on the sidelines.

# Official NFHS Baseball Signals

A. DO NOT PITCH



B. PLAY BALL



C. FOULBALL/TIME OUT/DEAD BALL



D. DELAYED DEAD BALL



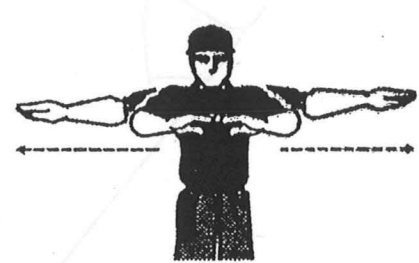
E. STRIKE/OUT



F. INFIELD FLY



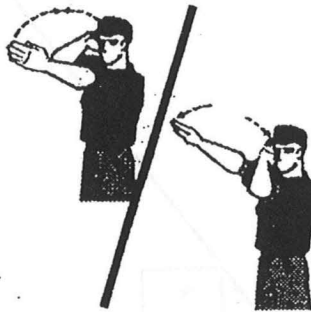
G. SAFE



H. FAIR BALL



I. FOUL TIP



J. COUNT



K. TIME PLAY



- A. Right arm straight out front with palm outward and fingers up — signifies do not pitch, the ball is dead.
- B. ~~Pointing with right hand index finger while facing pitcher~~ — signifies play is to start or be resumed and simultaneously umpire calls "Play."
- C. Both hands open above the head — signifies foulball, time-out or ball is dead immediately.
- D. Left fist extended to the side at shoulder height — signifies an infraction for which (1) the penalty may be ignored or (2) bases may be awarded after no further advance is possible.
- E. Fist up and then out away from body. Coordinate, verbal call, "He's out!" or "Strike!", with the hammering action of the closed fist.
- F. Index finger of right hand is held above the head — signifies infield fly.
- G. Coordinate verbal call, "Safe." Signal also used for dropped balls in the outfield and to determine if a batter's checked swing was legal.
- H. Point toward fair ground with open hand. No verbal call.
- I. The palms of the hands glance off each other as they pass above eye level, followed by a strike call.
- J. Left hand indicates balls followed by the number of strikes thrown on the right hand. Verbally give count.
- K. Place two fingers of the right hand on the left wrist, as if on top of a watch. This signal will only be used in two-out situations where a time play involving a potential run is likely.

## Umpire Rules and Things you Should Know.....

### 1. About Appeals.....

An appeal can be made by any player on the field, or a coach, after he or she notices that a player missed a base (in their mind.) Differences in how the appeal is then conducted.

- a. Live Ball.
  - > The player simply goes and tags the base and announces which player missed that base.
  - > The player goes and tags the runner and announces which base they missed.
- b. Dead Ball.
  - > The coach or player announces to the umpire that #23 for example missed 3rd base.

Result.....If the umpire noticed and agrees with the request.....the umpire should call that runner out.

### 2. About Strike Zones.....

Keep it simple and you should have good luck.

- a. Strike One..... Lower knees to the letters.  
Strike Two..... Lower knee caps to the letters.  
Strike Three..... Knees to just above the belly button.

### 3. About Awarded Bases on Balls Out of Play.....

There is a simple rule that you should always say to yourself before you start every game that you umpire from now on and for the rest of your life. "One from the mound and two from the field."

Awards from the Time of the Pitch.....

- a. One from the mound. If the pitch (from the mound) bounces in the dirt and goes off the catchers shin guards, or the umpires legs, and goes in the dug out or over the fence and out of play.....the result is dead ball and one extra base for the runners.
- b. Two from the field. If the ball is thrown from the short stop (or any other position) off of a ground ball, to the first baseman and goes out of bounds....then the player gets two bases from the time of the pitch - which means they get 2nd base. If the pitcher throws it wild to first after he/she fields a ground ball.....two bases as well, because the pitcher is now a fielder.

Awards from the Time of the Throw.....

- a. If a runner is tagging up on 1st base trying to advance on a long fly to left, and the left fielder throws the ball over 2nd and it goes out of play down the right field line.....then the award is two bases from the time of the throw.....in other words.....where was the runner when the ball went out of bounds? And from that point he/she gets two extra bases.

### 4. About Thunder & Lightening & Rain.....

Thunder.....If you hear thunder be aware, but that alone is not cause for cancellation.

Lightening.....If you see lightening ~~30~~ <sup>must</sup> the game should be paused for ~~at least 10~~ <sup>30</sup> minutes. If you see lightening again with in this set of ~~10~~ <sup>25</sup> minutes, add ~~10~~ <sup>25</sup> more minutes of pause action to the time that you saw the lightening. During this time the players should be cleared off the field of course. If you have dugouts they can go in there. If there are no dugouts, the players could wait in their parents cars.   
*or under a shelter*

Rain.....An intermittent drizzle is ok. An on and off shower is ok to play through. A down pour is not.

### 5. About Experience.....

There is no substitute for experience. The more you umpire the more comfortable you feel about umpiring. Do not expect to be good your first time out. However, with an open mind and a willing attitude you will get better. I have been umpiring since 1974. I can honestly tell you that I am always learning and always trying to get better.

# Umpire Critique Sheet

Umpire Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Date Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Person Observing \_\_\_\_\_

## Competencies:

Arrived on Time	Moves out from behind home plate on a ground ball to infield	
Voice Accompanying Calls	Position Between Innings	Quick Decision Maker
Communication with Coaches	Communication with Coaches/Players	Hustle
Communication with Players	Dressed Properly	Position on Field
Hand Mechanics on Out/Safe Calls	Voice on Out/Safe Calls	Fair Ball Points (Hands)
Willingness to Make the Call	Foul Ball Call (Voice)	Foul Ball Call (Hands)
Knowledge of Rules	Hand Mechanics on Strike Calls	Voice on Strike Calls

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Improvement Needed:

Arrived on Time	Moves out from behind home plate on a ground ball to infield	
Voice Accompanying Calls	Position Between Innings	Quick Decision Maker
Communication with Coaches	Communication with Coaches/Players	Hustle
Communication with Players	Dressed Properly	Position on Field
Hand Mechanics on Out/Safe Calls	Voice on Out/Safe Calls	Fair Ball Points (Hands)
Willingness to Make the Call	Foul Ball Call (Voice)	Foul Ball Call (Hands)
Knowledge of Rules	Hand Mechanics on Strike Calls	Voice on Strike Calls

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# BASEBALL RULES

All of the following statements are FALSE.

## Top 40 baseball rule myths...

1. The hands are considered part of the bat.
2. The batter-runner must turn to his right after over-running first base.
3. If the batter breaks his wrists when swinging, it's a strike.
4. If a batted ball hits the plate first it's a foul ball.
5. The batter cannot be called out for interference if he is in the batter's box.
6. The ball is dead on a foul-tip.
7. The batter may not switch batter's boxes after two strikes.
8. The batter who batted out of order is the person declared out.
9. The batter may overrun first base when he gets a base-on-balls.
10. The batter is out if he starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike.
11. If the batter does not pull the bat out of the strike zone while in the bunting position, it's an automatic strike.
12. The batter is out if a bunted ball hits the ground and bounces back up and hits the bat while the batter is holding the bat.
13. The batter is out if his foot touches the plate.
14. The batter-runner is always out if he runs outside the running lane after a bunted ball.
15. A runner is out if he slaps hands or high-fives other players, after a homerun is hit over the fence.
16. Tie goes to the runner.
17. The runner always gets the base he's going to, plus one on a ball thrown out-of-play.
18. Anytime a coach touches a runner, the runner is out.
19. Runners may never run the bases in reverse order.
20. The runner must always slide when the play is close.
21. The runner is always safe when hit by a batted ball while touching a base.
22. A runner may not steal on a foul-tip.
23. It is a force out when a runner is called out for not tagging up on a fly ball.
24. An appeal on a runner who missed a base cannot be a force out.
25. A runner is out if he runs out of the baseline to avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball.
26. Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called.
27. No run can score when a runner is called out for the third out for not tagging up.
28. A pitch that bounces to the plate cannot be hit.
29. The batter does not get first base if hit by a pitch after it bounces.
30. If a fielder holds a fly ball for 2 seconds it's a catch.
31. You must tag the base with your foot on a force out or appeal.
32. The ball is always immediately dead on a balk.
33. If a player's feet are in fair territory when the ball is touched, it is a fair ball.
34. The ball must always be returned to the pitcher before an appeal can be made.
35. With no runners on base, it is a ball if the pitcher starts his windup and then stops.
36. The pitcher must come to a set position before a pick-off throw.
37. The pitcher must step off the rubber before a pick-off throw.
38. If a fielder catches a fly ball and then falls over the fence it is a homerun.
39. The ball is dead anytime an umpire is hit by the ball.
40. The home plate umpire can overrule the other umps at anytime.





DISTRICT 110

## Community Education/Recreation

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Tim Liffin, Community Ed. Director

TO: Coaches Corner  
+  
Youth Umpires

### Player Gets Jail Time for Punching Ref

SANTA ANA, Calif. — Punching a referee equals nine months of jail time for a recreational basketball player from Long Beach.

Dontravian Evans, 29, who punched referee Kevin Robinson in the eye during a league championship game Sept. 13, 2000, was convicted of felony assault and sentenced Jan. 28 to nine months in jail and

three years of probation. Evans must also pay \$3,400 for out-of-pocket expenses, and cover Robinson's medical bills.

Evans could have been sentenced to up to seven years of prison, but Judge John Ryan felt the assault wasn't as severe as others that have warranted such time.

The incident happened

early in the championship game when the score was only 2-0. Evans, who was upset about a call, struck Robinson when he was looking at the scorer's table. Robinson didn't see the punch coming.

The blow caused permanent damage to Robinson's eye. According to *The Orange County Register*, Deputy District

Attorney Chris Simmons, who was disappointed with the sentence, said, "This is an injury that Mr. Robinson never will recover from." Robinson, who still referees games, experiences "flashes" that make it sometimes hard for him to read and watch television. Robinson could not be reached for comment. Contributing source: *The Orange County Register* □

### Coach Sentenced for Ump Attack

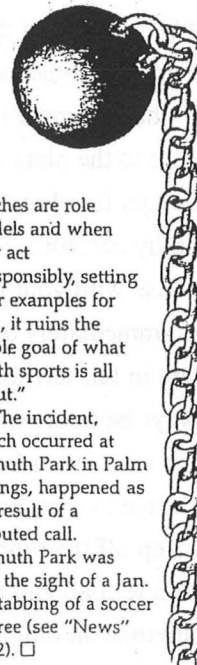
PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — Jail time was the sentence handed out Feb. 13 to an assistant baseball coach who attacked an umpire during a Palm Springs Youth Baseball game in June 2001.

Kenneth Williams, 32, of Palm Springs, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor battery for his attack on umpire Richard Jenkins, which knocked the official unconscious. Williams will serve 180 days in Riverside County Jail, three years of probation, and he can no longer participate on any level in youth sports.

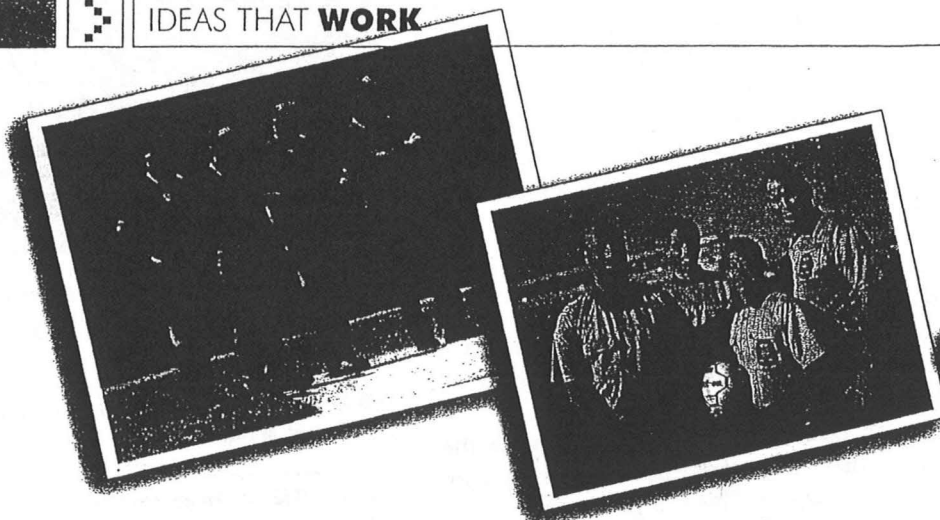
According to *The (Palm Springs) Desert Sun*, Riverside County Deputy District Attorney Antonio Fimbres said, "Certainly

coaches are role models and when they act irresponsibly, setting poor examples for kids, it ruins the whole goal of what youth sports is all about."

The incident, which occurred at Demuth Park in Palm Springs, happened as the result of a disputed call. Demuth Park was also the sight of a Jan. 20 stabbing of a soccer referee (see "News" 4/02). □





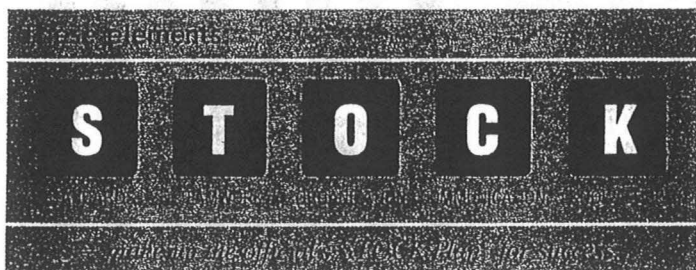


Take  
**STOCK**  
in being a  
good official

By Mark Heckel

In the sixth century B.C., Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu said of leadership, "A leader is best when people barely know he exists." The same could be said of a good official. If we really want to be effective as officials, then the players, coaches and spectators should barely notice that we are part of the action.

While we know that being a good official involves time, preparation and an understanding of the rules, we also know that it involves much more. We could make a long list of things that go into making a good official, but I believe that we can boil them down to five essential elements.



## **S**tandards

In any sport, standards of play are established for the athletes, standards of decorum for the coaches and standards of conduct for the spectators. As officials, we should set standards for ourselves as well.

When we appear to start a game or match, we should be sure that we are in the proper uniform that is clean and pressed. The standard should be that we look professional and that we act in a professional manner. We should be attired properly, and not give the appearance of being uncaring about our dress or appearance and the task at hand.

Our bearing, posture and overall continence are also standards that we should live up to. Officials should be approachable, but should also retain a sense of detachment from either team. The standard should be that we are professional in demeanor, but personable in attitude.

The good official will also set standards for his or her crew. As the crew chief, it is reasonable to expect that the level of professionalism that you set will be matched by your crew. If your standard is set low, then the level of performance from your crew will be low as well. This, in turn, lowers the level of play and can lead to sloppy action on the field or court. The student-athletes will play to the standard that you and your crew set.

## **T**eamwork

We hear about teamwork in sport all the time. Far too often, we forget that as officials, we need to employ good teamwork to make the contest run smoothly. If our crew works as a team, and not as a collection of individuals, we will have a great contest between student-athletes, and we will make our individual and collective jobs more interesting and rewarding.

As a chief judge or crew chief, I foster teamwork in several different ways. I try to never forget that my brother and sister officials are part of the same team that I am. Before and after each competition, we gather as a team to discuss our objectives for that event, what each team member's responsibility will be and any other details that we need to discuss.

More importantly, after the event we meet again to discuss the good and bad of what we just finished. Each member of the officiating team has an equal voice, and I encourage them to make observations that will improve our efficiency or enhance our professionalism. Remember, our team members may see things that have occurred during the competition that you may not have noticed, but are nonetheless important.

Another way to foster teamwork is through crew rotation. If at all possible, try to work a different officiating position from time to time, and place other officials in your crew in new positions of responsibility. Not only does this show them that you have respect for their skills, it also prepares them for taking over that position if necessary.

## **O**rganization

We have different levels of organization as officials: personal, team and event. If we are less than fully organized in any of these areas, our performance, and possibly the performance of the officiating team, may suffer.

At the beginning of each season, I make a checklist of the equipment that I will need. I have a separate gear bag for the season, and I check it to be sure that I have everything I need. I do this well in advance of my first assignment, so that I have time to acquire the items I need and get them into my gear bag.

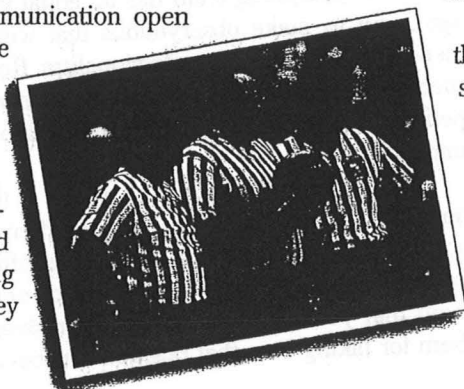
At the team level, I try to contact the officials that I am working with in advance to let them know what we will be doing, what to expect from me, what I expect from them, and what they should bring with them. When we meet at the event site, I will go over our organizational hierarchy, and review how we will handle certain situations that could occur during the competition.

Organization at the event level is most important. We need to be sure that we have the right equipment on hand for the competition, that we are aware of the ground rules of the facility, and what our chain of command and communication is. If our event organization is lacking, the teams will know.

## **C**ommunication

If you don't talk to your crew, and if they don't communicate with you, it can make for a very long day. Communication among all members of the crew, among you and the contestants and coaches, and among you and game administration is vitally important.

If you need something before or during the contest, you need to have the channels of communication open in order to rectify the situation with minimal disruption to the contest. Communication between you and game administration will help to avoid problems by talking about them before they occur.



In any sport, if you are the crew chief, make sure that coaches and competitors know that you are the person to talk to if there is a problem. In the same vein, make sure that your crew knows to whom to refer questions. If you have a clear line of communication, many things that may appear to be problems will soon disappear.

## **K**nowledge

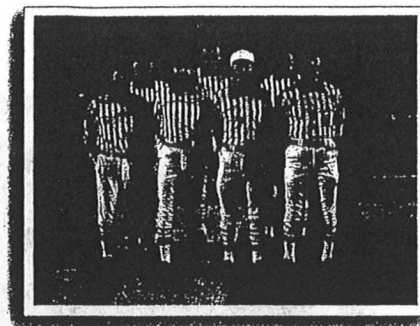
How can you officiate a contest if you don't know the rules? Sadly, sometimes we have officials who don't. It is a basic policy of mine to review the rules of the competition before the contest begins. This is a good refresher for me, as well a means of getting me into the mindset of what I will be doing that day.

We should also make some effort to be aware of the specific contestants. If we know that they have tendencies or trends, we need to be aware of them and how they may affect the contest. This allows us to be in the right position to make the call, and not be caught out of position or unprepared.

Knowledge of the facility in which the contest will be played is also important. We should know any unique ground rules, any unique features of the venue, and any potential problems that the venue may present. Having knowledge of these areas will make the contest run smoothly, since we will be aware of potential problems or "quirks" that may affect the contest.

By developing, following, reviewing and revising our STOCK Plan<sup>®</sup>, we can continue to improve as officials in any sport that we are officiating. As will a stock portfolio, if we manage our plan carefully and prudently, it will increase in value, and will enhance our value as an official.

In finishing his thought on leadership, Lao-tzu added " ... but of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aims fulfilled, they will say 'We did it ourselves.'" A



good official should be just as invisible, allowing the athletes to feel they "did it themselves." **OQ**

*Official photos provided by 20/20 Photographic, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.*

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Mark Heckel is a USA Track and Field Master-level official and a registered track and field official in Pennsylvania. A coach, competitor, clinician and official in track and field for 23 years, Heckel has officiated Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association state championships; USA Track and Field Junior, Senior and Masters championships; and the 1992 and 2004 U.S. Olympic Team Trials. He was a staff member on the 2005 Junior Pan American Team, and is involved in officials training with USA Track and field.



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Metro Athletic	952-942-8525 (Erv)
Honig's	1-800-468-3284.

## Between Inning Position:

Umpires should stand with toes just off the foul line, midway between 1st and home one inning, and the next inning alternate to the 3rd base line. Again with toes just off the foul line, midway between 3rd and home. Alternate again next 1/2 inning, etc.

Rules Questions? Call Tim Little @ 442-5548.

