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Champion Coach Note: Officials as PARTNERS



It is hard to be a sports official at any level. Officials are asked to make instant decisions on plays that are moving at high speeds, and sometimes with high stakes. They are often the point of criticism, and rarely the recipient of thanks. Players, fans, and coaches take them for granted, but without them, uncertainty, bickering, and controversy would muddle competition.

"The trouble with referees is that they just don't care which side wins."

- Tom Canterbury

As a coach, it is important to keep expectations of officials in proper perspective. Referees, umpires, judges and other officials exist to provide an unbiased regulation of the rules and parameters of a sporting event. They **try** to make all the accurate calls, but that simply cannot be done. That is a hard pill to swallow: to recognize that officials are not there to get every call right. They are there to keep the game moving along at an appropriate pace, and to ensure to the best of their abilities that fairness and regulations are upheld.

Unfortunately, this means that officials can make incorrect judgments, and sometimes the calls can fall at critical junctures in a match. As a Play Like a Champion Today coach, it is important to remind yourself that officiating is another element of the game that cannot be controlled, just like the weather. As a coach, it is critical that you focus only on the elements of a game that can be controlled.

And beyond dealing with the wrong, the

negative, and the bad elements of officiating, remember that officials are human beings! As a coach, it is important to set the proper example for your athletes in how to treat other human beings. Although the popular sports culture often pits teams against officials, it's important to realize that meaningful competition would be impossible without officials, and often times they do an excellent job. So as a coach, try to make sure you and officials are PARTNERS and to work together, make sure you keep your actions in check:

- Players-Proactively tell your team that officials are here to help the game go smoothly.
- Approach Appropriately-It is OK to discuss issues with an official. Just do it during a break in the action.
- Recognize-When officials make a good call, let them know!
- Thank-Before and after every game, and make sure athletes do as well.
- Notice-If players complain about officials, remind them to focus on parts of the game they can control.
- Empathize-Officials often work alone to cover a large field of play. It's hard to see every angle!
- Respect-Officials are human beings doing their best to provide a service to the athletes playing the game.