

What's in your tool box?

In the last sixteen years, NFHS has published no less than nine articles on how to manage sportsmanship. Let us review the highlights and stock our tool box for success.

Sportsmanship is a balancing act of letting players, coaches and fans express their opinions, frustrations and cheering for their teams all in the spirit of competition.

NFHS gives us four tools:

- 1) Verbal
- 2) Yellow card
- 3) Red card
- 4) Red/Yellow card

We have four primary support personnel to assist us:

- 1) Partner
- 2) Head coach
- 3) Team captain
- 4) Host management

NFHS rules encourage us to use each tool in order whenever possible, but at times events may require us to jump a tool when the action is egregious enough to warrant a stiffer penalty than the procedures encourage.

Player conduct usually falls into two categories:

- 1) Frustrated with their own play
- 2) Frustrated with a referee call

Coach conduct has a similar approach:

- 1) Frustrated with players not executing
- 2) Frustrated with referees consistency and or application of a rule

Fans on the other hand may have no rhyme or reason at times except to support their team at any cost.

As referees we at times make mistakes. If it is a rule application, own up to it, do not defend your position just to be correct. If possible fix the application error by rule either by correcting/reversing your call, and or issuing a replay. If it is a judgment call, all you can do is move forward and not let it happen again. Just because you missed a judgment call on one side does not mean you now miss one on the other side to balance the play.

When mistakes are corrected by referees we gain respect from the contest participants by correcting it moving forward.

Volleyball is played with emotion, do not stifle enthusiasm, but find ways to lead the contest down a path that is respectful to all participants from the fan who spent \$5, to the players and coaches who spent the last week preparing for the night's contest and the officials who have studied and have dedicated hours of preparation to doing their best for the student athlete.

Set the bar high for sporting behavior. Respect will be earned if we hold all participants to a high level of respect for each other from the referee>coach>player>fan.

We are the role model for the evening. Be respectful in the face of adversity. When sporting behavior needs to be addressed be calm, be precise and always use your captain(s) and head coach(s) to communicate with players and bench personnel. In the case of fan behavior use host management to address it, never do it yourself.

Example: when a coach continually questions judgement calls, a quick quiet verbal warning from the R2 reminding the coach that is unsporting, is all one may need to for the rest of the evening. The R1 may also speak with the captain about the coach's behavior and have them go speak with their coach. But if we allow it to continue to the point where we are forced to issue a sanctioned card, we missed the opportunity early to address the behavior with our first tool "Verbal".

Example: Player A1 throws their hands in the air each time a double hit is called on their setter. Bring the captain to the referee stand and asking them to remind their player that is unsporting. An early warning will avoid a sanctioned card later. Again do not miss an opportunity to use your "Verbal" tool by using one of our support personnel to correct the behavior.

Understand the Hierarchy of Tolerance:

- 1) **Fans** are allowed lots of leeway. They paid their \$5 to yell, scream and cheer for their team. Much of the time they are reacting to losing a rally versus actually understanding what happened. Allow host management to set the standard of tolerance for the night whenever possible, and use them to address any behavior that is a violation of CHSAA and NFHS sporting rules.
- 2) **Head coaches** are the face of their team. It is their job to support their players and advocate on their behalf when things seem amiss. Allow them to voice their concerns and frustrations in a respectful manner leading them down a path that is appropriate for the contest. Allow them to coach their players, but not coach the referees. Use them to address any behavior problems prior to issuing a sanction.
- 3) **Captains** are tasked with the responsibility to take care of their team members. They are allowed to speak with the referees by asking questions. Use them to address any behavior problems prior to issuing a sanction. This includes players on the floor and bench personnel.
- 4) **Assistant coaches** are there to support the head coach with coaching players and cheering for their team. They should never be allowed to address the referees in a negative manner.
- 5) **Bench personnel** their role is to cheer and be supportive of the players on the court. They should never be allowed to address other contestants in a negative manner.

- 6) **Table personnel** are part of the official's team, and are never allowed to act in an unsporting manner.
- 7) **Cheerleaders/Mascots** they represent their school and are tasked with leading the fans in a positive way to cheer for their teams. They are never allowed to be disrespectful to any participant in the contest.

Always listen before responding and never react to unsporting behavior. When we react, we tend to choose the wrong tool for the job. In rare circumstances we jump tools in our tool box. After you use one tool, allow a minute for the tool to do its job. Do not be quick to jump to the next tool, allow the participant a moment to think about their behavior and correct it before we select the next tool.

Colorado volleyball has a history of some the lowest sanctions per season leading the way in sporting behavior. We have had only a handful of ejections over the last twenty years from our CVOA membership.

Let us do everything in our power and use all of our tools in the box.

What have you filled your tool box with lately?