

UMPIRE DO'S and DON'TS

Before we start our season, let's all look at ourselves in the mirror and work on some of these if any pertain to us. We've all done some of these, myself included.

1. Don't be high maintenance. Do you realize every time you make life tough on your supervisor it adds to their daily stress and adds to their day? Be on time, get your reports in on time, return phone calls, accept games immediately on the arbiter, have your blocks up to date, be available to work, meet deadlines, umpire the games and don't cause smoke, don't give games back, eliminate calls to the Supervisor from schools.

2. Don't, Not Know the Rules. This is you, your partner and our associations integrity out there. Hit the books. Take pride in knowing the rules. Never have it be a situation where a team has to come back and play because you didn't know the rule. We have a lot of mentors in our association, we have rule clinics on Monday nights, but it gets down to you knowing the rules. Have the character to keep reading the rule book after the test. Remember, we're all counting on you.

3. Don't Be all about the money. Of course we need to be compensated to work games and we are individual contractors. We all have to travel to some schools we don't like or that are too far away. Sometimes we do need to spend money to go to clinics to get better. Sometimes there are rain outs before the first pitch is thrown. Yes we do have to pay state and booking fees. Uniforms and gear are expensive this day and age. But, we've all made a decision to umpire games in a great area of the country. Gripping will hurt you more in the end than it will ever help you. Supervisors, partners, coaches and friends don't want to hear it and tells people a lot about who you are.

4. Don't talk too much. As a coach I always told my players, "show us don't tell us." Criticizing someone else that umpires reveals more about you negatively than the subject you are throwing under the bus. Your partner is your only friend on the field and at the site. Coaches and AD's are not your friends and will turn on you in a second. Sharing info with them will be out to others usually before you get home.

5. Don't Fraternize. It can get lonely umpiring this great sport over 100 games February through November. Once we enter schools we stay away from coaches, players and parents. They may be nice to your face, but in the end they want something. Ever notice when you say something to a catcher or 1st baseman what happens? It's in the dugout as soon as they exit the field at the completion of the inning. If you talk to one coach before the game, you've already upset the other one. Speak when spoken to. Don't talk to players or coaches during the game, they have jobs to do. Professionally answer their questions at the appropriate times. Prior to game time, walk the field, check equipment. Stay away from dugouts after equipment check. In between innings go where they aren't. After the game exit the field immediately on the winning side.

6. Don't Create off the field problems. We've all chosen to be umpires. We're always visible. In the parking lot, at the gas station, in the restaurant. Don't go and buy beer with your uniform on. Don't stay for the next game and talk to fans with your uniform on. Don't go to baseball games and gripe about or yell at umpires...no matter what the situation is. People know who we are. They also know what association we work for and who at the state to call. Don't use tobacco or tobacco like products on school sites.

7. Do Look good on the field and off. By now you know what to wear and how to wear it to look good! Communicate professionalism. Driving into the parking lot before the game, don't look sloppy, dress like you're a professional. No ripped shirts, blue jeans, pants with holes, etc. Don't look like an unmade bed before, during and after the game. Everything about you needs to communicate professionalism.

8. Do Treat people right. Partners, game management, players, coaches, ball boys, ticket takers, concession people. Treat them right, use the golden rule. Say please, yes sir, please, excuse me and thank you. Officials have been blocked from certain schools by their attitude with game management after being told where to

park. Are you kidding me? We know we are going to have to park in bad places with little privacy with long walks to the field. This one will bite you in the end and lower your rating. People keep track and remember. That person that you showed disrespect may be in charge of something someday that is important to you.

9. Don't be arrogant and unapproachable. What worked on the field up to 5 years ago is no longer accepted. We have to work with coaches and players. People pay to see them not us. Games are not about us, they're about the schools, players, coaches and teams. We have to work with people, we have to warn coaches. Emotions run high, they can't for us though. We have to always be above it. You have to be approachable and educational. You have to explain why these days. Proper communication on the field under control is now mandatory. Big timing people is useless. No one cares what game you did last night (partners included). We don't have to always be right. Let the coach be right. Let him walk away. Remember, I can't help you if you use profanity. No nose to nose confrontations with coaches. Walk away, partner get in there.

10. Social Media. You post something online about a coach, a player, a game, a partner or a school you'll be done. It will be online...forever. You can't take back what you post. Tweets, face book posts about anything involving high school athletics and those that are part of it will ruin your career.

Let's go back to work and work on having a great year for our association.

CTM