

Spotlight on Officials - From Ties to Stripes....

by Brennan Torgerson, Buhler



I was fortunate to be a head basketball coach for 25 years in Kansas; 4 years coaching boys and 21 coaching girls. After the 2014 season, I decided to “retire” from basketball to follow my kid’s college careers on the golf course and pursue some other interests. I had the privilege to coach many great student-athletes. During those 25 years, I developed friendships with coaches, officials, and administrators. I love the game of basketball so I wanted to find a way to stay involved. Officiating was something I had always been intrigued with so in August of 2014 I decided to start the process of becoming an official.

The first step to becoming an official is registering with KSHSAA. I made a personal decision to start at the middle school and sub-varsity high school level so I contacted all the athletic directors in the area. Keep in mind, at the time I had no experience officiating. I had athletic directors respond they had openings and would send me their open dates. Within a month, I had a fairly full schedule of middle school and high school sub-varsity games. I spent the next few months learning as much as I could by talking to veteran officials and area supervisors, going to the beginning officials’ camp and finding game film to observe officials. By the end of my first year I officiated four (4) varsity games along with my other games, I was hooked. I just completed my 4th year in March by working my first state tournament; it was truly an honor to represent the officials in Kansas and KSHSAA. I had the privilege to coach in multiple state tournaments; I had always thought getting assigned to one as an official would be incredible. It didn’t disappoint, it was even better than I had imagined.

I have been partnered with officials who worked games I coached. I have also had the opportunity to officiate games with teams and coaches I once coached against. Even though my role has changed, I feel like I never left the game. Basketball officiating is more challenging than I thought it would be; it didn’t take long to develop a strong appreciation for the profession. I knew the coaching fraternity was strong; I had no idea the officiating fraternity was even stronger. I believe it is stronger because coaching is tied to wins and losses; officiating is focused on working together to call the best game possible.

The attributes I appreciated about officials when I was coaching are a strong whistle, communicative and worked hard. I have tried to take the things I appreciated as a coach and be as good as I can with those as an official. I still consider myself a “newbie” compared to the officials I have had the privilege to work with or have watched work. I have created a list in no particular order of things I think are important to be a successful official.

- 1) Look professional, a first impression can’t be undone.
- 2) Work hard.
- 3) Communicate with coaches and players.
- 4) Know the rules and have a strong whistle, be heard.
- 5) Proper and crisp mechanics, tell the story.
- 6) Treat every game as the most important one you will ever work because it may be that important to the schools or players that night.

- 7) Communicate with your partners; strive to be the best team on the floor every night.
- 8) When dealing with coaches; try to understand their “world.” They have worked really hard and committed lots of time and energy to get their team ready to play. Be prepared to answer questions or just listen; their perspective deserves our attention.
- 9) Never stop trying to improve: participate in the summer camps, ask for feedback from veteran officials/league commissioners/area supervisors, and request game film to self-evaluate.
- 10) Don’t take criticism personally; believe in yourself and your preparation to call a great game.
- 11) Be consistent, similar fouls on one end of the floor is also a foul on the other end.
- 12) Be grateful for all the game assignments you receive.
- 13) Have a support system away from officiating. In my case, my wife has been my biggest fan and best advocate to jump in with both feet. I would also encourage officials to take your support system to games with you occasionally so they can experience what a game night is like for an official.
- 14) Have fun and smile.
- 15) Officiate the game based on the rules of the game, not where you are or who you are officiating.

I have now experienced the role of parent, coach and official. The consistency with all three is building and sustaining relationships in whatever role you possess. The game is for the student-athletes; I hope they always have center stage when I am on the court in stripes. I have a new passion and have many people to thank for helping me progress. I love officiating and can’t get enough of it. Be an official; you won’t regret it!

#MyReasonWhy, #BecomeAnOfficial