



Eight Qualities of a Great Referee

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There is no doubt that Europe currently has some of the best referees in the world and that is reflected by the nominations that they receive on a global level. The strong club and national team competitions demand the best job from our team of referee's week in week out. Since joining FIBA Europe in 2005, I have had the opportunity to witness at first hand the different personalities, styles and qualities that exist within our team of officials. Everyone has their own personality and it is important and sometimes necessary that the personality of the referee be seen on the court. However, the focus of the game should always be the competitors. The officials should never be in the spotlight or be the focus of the game. When looking at the top officials that exist in Europe, they will probably all possess the following qualities.

INTEGRITY:

A great referee is a guardian of honesty in each basketball competition.

The referee must of course maintain a complete absence of bias. Nowadays we have seen that sports managers, coaches and now even referees in other sports such as soccer have been involved in illegal activities. However, in general, referees are rarely accused of any kind of dishonest or deceitful conduct. If you aspire to be a great referee, you must never put yourself in a position where your integrity could be questioned. It can take many years to build up an image of high in integrity; however, it may take only one action or mistake to destroy that image. If there is ever any possibility of a conflict of interest, never put yourself in that position or, if there is any chance that your integrity can be questioned through an action, don't do it.

PHYSICAL FITNESS:

PIt has long been recognized and proven, that there is a direct connection between your physical condition and your mental state. If you become physically tired during, or especially towards the end of a game, then your level of concentration will also suffer, or decline. The modern professional players are in great shape and so the referee must also be in good shape, to keep pace with the game for all four quarters. Games can be decided in the last quarter or of course even in the final seconds. It is really impossible for a referee to make mistakes at the end of the contest, which may affect the outcome of the game. Your fitness will have at some stage, a direct effect on how

you perform in a game whether the effect is good or bad, will depend on the investment an official has made in his fitness. Nowadays, the preparation and training that should take place continues throughout the season or even during the tournament in different forms. Referees should of course work in the off-season to be in shape, and continue this work whilst they are also officiating throughout the season.

HUSTLE

Officiating is game of angles, positioning and movement. This is true for the players and should also therefore be the same for the referees. Hustle describes this movement to a position on the court. There is no connection to speed and meaningless motion. Being quick and running a lot does not necessarily make you a good official. Every great referee moves efficiently to be in the right place at the right time in order to see the spaces between the players. It's the only way to see the whole play, from the best angle, to see the spaces means that you can also make good decisions on the responsibility for contact and then have a good chance to make the correct decision. Hustle also means that your movement in dead ball situations such as moving to the table to a new position, should not be done whilst walking. Move efficiently and with a purpose and keep the game moving with your hustle.

JUDGEMENT

Great judgment can be a result of and experience. Few officials are born with it and many have to work hard at it. Therefore, it can also be described as an instinctive ability to apply the principals of advantage/disadvantage. When you see a play, in almost every case,

if there is no advantage gained and if no player has been put at a disadvantage, there should be no call. Simply put: "Don't stop the music."

COMMUNICATION

This really means, "Can you deal with people?" Can you deal with coaches, players and even co-officials during the game? Communication can be accomplished in many ways and in most cases the situation will dictate your appropriate response. Sometimes a simple response to the question, a one word answer, or even a look can communicate effectively what is needed at a particular time. Saying the right thing to the right person at the right time can help one avoid potential problems in a game. Communication is also the knowledge of when it is best not to say anything – or to be quiet! When communicating, treat people as you would wish to be treated yourself.

CONSISTENT

This is what every coach wants and your almost always hear it from the sideline in any game. Unfortunately you cannot buy this in a shop! Younger officials have more difficulty with consistency than any other quality, mainly because they lack the experience to know when they are being inconsistent. However, you only gain experience through making mistakes. Everyone has difficulty at some time with consistency, but the great referees are relentless in their judgment. The great officials see and call a game better than their colleagues because their feeling for game and for what is right, is better. If the coaches and players believe that the official is consistent, they will adjust accordingly. Inconsistent decisions on

similar plays will create negative behaviour and poor sportsmanship among players and invite criticism from coaches. Consistent officiating and use of good criteria, will help your game control and management.

COURAGE

Regardless of the situation, personalities involved, pressures from the crowd, media or possible repercussions, great referees place fairness above all other concerns. They act courageously and according to the dictates of that value. Have the courage of your convictions? Or have you got the strength (or guts!), for tough, but fair decisions.

COMMON SENSE

Of all the qualities a referee must possess, common sense is the most important. That which is fair and right should always take precedence in every contest. Common sense ensures that fairness, understanding, and the best interests of the game are foremost in the mind of the referee. If you truly understand the spirit and the intent of the rules, common sense will guide you well. Plenty of game situations develop that are not specifically covered by rules or mechanics. That's when common sense must take over. What is fair or what is right, is what should be done. Common sense goes hand in hand with Communication and dealing with coaches and players. It helps determine how to handle a tough situation and for example, whether a technical foul should or should not be called.

This last point is perhaps the non-written factor in officiating that is most important. It is not in a rule book, a manual or even available in a shop. But it is about thinking

calmly and logically about what is right for the game and the participants.

SUMMARY

Of course there may be other factors that determine people's opinions on whether a referee is good, such as presentation or appearance, or even the language that is spoken. These attributes probably will not have a direct affect on how the game is managed, although there may help of hinder to create a good first impression. The participants will make judgments of the management of the game, the ability of the referee to understand and appreciate what is taking place, and also a good recognition of exactly what the contest means to everyone involved. Without this and the qualities mentioned here, referees will be at a disadvantage compared to their colleagues who are able to do so and have these qualities.

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