



## CORNY'S CORNER

### *Why Can't We All Get Along?*

*Corny Galdones, July 2009*

People skills are a huge part of being an official. Dealing with others is a lost art for the bashful or brash. It eludes those who hide their weaknesses behind red and yellow cards along with those who have risen in rank to a level of authority and expect blind obedience of their every command. Our job is about control, not owning it but maintaining it. How we go about it and how we handle others make a big difference in how our directions and decisions are received. We have the right and might to tell folks what they can do and where they can go. Use, don't abuse, these powers for rubbing anyone the wrong way can turn, or worse, tick that person off. Of the many social practices that will do the trick, one based on a proven adage is more in tune with our line of work. We'll catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

We're in charge. Still, this doesn't mean we're always right. Opposing opinions may have merit. Hear them out. Nothing can be gained to be like lawyers and rush to explain or defend our position before we find out what the fuss is all about. Stop. Listen. It takes two to have a conversation, not one. If our lips are moving or our minds closed, we won't learn a thing. As for criticism, it's nothing personal. It comes with the job for crying out loud. Stifle those emotions, not the source. Do something about it and turn this negative into a positive.

Sometimes, we have to issue a decree someone won't like. Whether it's met with harmony or grudge, or cooperated with at all, depends on how we present it. Straight talk, sweet talk, humor or whatever device we use, there's a knack to it being accepted. It's civil, firm and persuading without making demands or ultimatums, ordering people around or putting them down. Leave our respect and their dignity intact. This isn't the Army. Adding "please" and "thank you" won't hurt either, but pick the proper spots. Such courtesies will be out of place when coaches question calls. Let them have their say, answer or address their concerns, then end all discussion with a concise, conclusive statement. *"Coach, shut up and sit your butt down."* Not! We wish to say that at times but must be careful and tactful. Find smooth ways to sway a coach to return to coaching and to leave the officiating to us. Play ball.

See others eye to eye. We can't if we look down on them. Instead of condescension, we'd benefit by having egalitarianism in our vocabularies and views. Believe in it. Marie Antoinette didn't, and look what happened. The commoners revolted. Let's not lose our heads like her. No matter our stature or theirs, be nice to the hoi polloi on our way up for we'll be meeting them on our way down. Remember, everybody is somebody in real life. What do our comrades do for bucks and yucks? Who are they? Compared to some who are full of surprises, we're duds. No doubt, they're more interesting. Who are we anyway to be stuck up? Create goodwill with a warm "hi," name greeting and bonhomie to anyone high or low. This parity mindset, however, won't do much good unless it comes from the heart. Like the tragic queen suggested, we can have our cake and eat it too. It's the best of times. That's no tale.

Wouldn't it be great if we officials could do our jobs in a vacuum free of hassles? That's not the way it is. Our venues aren't desert islands. There's no escape from knowing how to deal with people for we can't get along without them. What's best for one of us may not suit the rest. We each must develop our own practical style that works. It's not a piece of cake.