



CORNY'S CORNER

Individual Sanctions

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The intelligent issuance of individual sanctions is a fine balance of letting the teams express their opinions and vent frustrations in the spirit of competition while making sure their activities are not harmful to anyone or the match. It's getting a feel for the tenor and severity of each misconduct and determining the suitable action to take. Technically, an official could issue a sanction for every misconduct, but that's taking the fun out of the game. However, ignoring and not regulating misconduct results in the match getting out of hand. Find a happy medium.

Types of individual sanctions. Inappropriate behavior by an individual can be formally disciplined with sanctions in non-repeating, progressive order: official verbal warning, yellow card, expulsion and disqualification. A sanction level may be skipped based on your judgment on which punishment fits the misdeed. An official verbal warning is only a warning and causes no scoring harm. If it's warranted, feel free to use this handy deterrent of future misconduct. A yellow card with its scoring penalty consequence is issued if trouble persists from the same individual who received an official verbal warning. Expulsion (or red card) of a disorderly individual from the game is better to use at game point than a yellow card to avoid ending the game on a penalty point. Disqualification (both cards held in one hand) is advisable to remove an aggressive, hostile individual from the facility for the match. Similar misconduct by different individuals should be treated the same. Individual sanctions are in effect for the entire match, not just the game they were issued.

Types of misconduct. There are two basic types of misconduct, accidental and deliberate. Accidental misconduct, commonly by a player who just made an error, is a spontaneous, improper action without malice and not damaging to the officiating crew, opponents, or operation of the match. It usually can be handled with preventive measures as described below. All other improper behavior is deliberate misbehavior. Control deliberate misbehavior! Otherwise, it will be perceived that you have lost control of the match. For deliberate misbehavior, your objectives are to restore order and to inhibit this type of misconduct from happening again. Take preventive measures if that will do the job. Definitely issue a sanction to defuse a volatile situation when tensions are running high or an individual is unruly.

Drawing the line. Set your limits on the type of behavior that will be tolerated. Timing is critical. Establish control on the very first incident having any hint of improper behavior and continue to reinforce that control throughout the match. Being passive implies approval of that type of behavior and leads to worse conduct that will become harder to control unless nipped in the bud. What might seem harmless at first could reach a boiling point. An example is playful banter between teams turning into trash talk, or worse, animosity. An ounce of prevention goes a long way in curtailing misconduct. At the very first sign of improper behavior, take affirmative action with preventive measures such as a cautionary whistle, a "settle down" gesture, a stern look, a verbal warning to both teams communicated through the floor captains, or a combination of these actions. Use "people" skills to ease your informal reprimand and promote cooperation. A repeat offender of deliberate misbehavior deserves a sanction. You've already given a forewarning. If you don't follow through, you lose credibility and authority.

Show the teams you mean business, or they will walk all over you.

Being addressed. Permit only the floor captain to address you. Never stray from this policy. Any player other than the floor captain confronting you to dispute a call deserves a sanction. Players other than the floor captain wanting to speak to you should be instructed to discuss their concern with their floor captain. A player repeatedly ignoring this directive warrants a sanction. The floor captain should be allowed to state his/her case. Be approachable and diplomatic. Explain your reasoning or ruling, then get on with the match. Do not put up with abusive, belligerent, or offensive language, or delaying tactics. These are grounds for a sanction.

Dealing with bench coaches. Let the coaches coach, but don't let them coach you. Do not invite or allow the coach to approach you on the stand. Any complaints, questions, or concerns the coach has should be communicated to you through either the second referee or that team's floor captain. Let the coach express his/her view, but without delaying the match, being obnoxious, or telling you how to do your job. If that happens or the coach yells a criticism to you from across the court or approaches your stand, issue a sanction.

Play calling and mistakes. If the teams become more concerned about your play calling than playing the game, issue a sanction to the next person(s) questioning your judgment and get the teams' refocused on the game instead of on your play calling. If a team feels you have done it a wrong, do whatever is possible to prevent penalizing the team twice, once for your perceived mistake and again with a sanction for probable misconduct. Stay level-headed. Perform preventive measures to tactfully deal with players letting off steam. If the affected team is obstinate, quiet it with a sanction. If needed, gather play input from your work team. Then enact the necessary corrective actions for your mistake. Do not continually hide behind sanctions to protect your officiating weaknesses. Improve yourself to limit these circumstances.

Work team protection. Your work team of the second referee, line judges, and scorekeeper is to be accorded the same courtesies from the teams as you. Protect them. Take charge. Whistle and motion any harassing individuals away from them. If any misconduct directed at your work team gets out of line, issue a sanction. Your second referee is empowered to request from you the issuance of a sanction using communication modes discussed in your joint prematch conference. Honor these requests. Don't leave your partner high and dry.

Identification of offender. When issuing an individual sanction, it is important all players, both team benches, second referee, scorekeeper, and especially the offender are aware you are issuing a sanction and to whom it is being awarded. Letting everyone know of the disciplinary action discourages others with similar notions. Don't be in a hurry to issue the sanction the instant the infraction occurs. Otherwise, you might not achieve full effect. Often it's best to wait until order is restored.

Issuance mechanics. A composed, unrushed delivery shows you're in control. Keep your yellow card and red card separate and concealed. Know in which pocket each one is placed so you don't fumble around to retrieve the desired colored card. If you don't have everyone's undivided attention, toot your whistle. When a player on the court is being sanctioned, beckon that player to the stand. When someone on the bench is being sanctioned, call the playing team captain to the stand to inform the bench offender of the sanction. Keep a poker face. Use the hand on the side of the court of the offender. For an official verbal warning, hold up the index finger and state, "I am issuing an official verbal warning, let's play." For all other sanctions, hold the card(s) straight up in the hand. The offender must acknowledge to you of receiving the sanction. For a yellow card, signal its resultant scoring action. Add

sparing remarks for penalty clarification only, no ad libbing. Settle the entire situation before resuming the match.

Effective match control is an art. Maintain order by wisely managing the conduct and emotions of the competitors with clever use of finesse, preventive measures, and individual sanctions without dampening their spirit and enjoyment of the competition. Learning these techniques and recognizing the specific deliberate misbehavior for which the issuance of an individual sanction is the only viable option are master skills every official should develop.