



## CORNY'S CORNER

### *Tricks of the Trade*

*Corny Galdones, February 2002*

There are many individual techniques and tricks to help one officiate volleyball. Here is what one seasoned official has learned through the years of plying the trade.

#### RECORD KEEPING

- Study the IRS regulations on self-employment to know your entitled tax deductions, i.e., mileage, uniforms, equipment, dues, plane fare, per diem away from home, etc. You can even write off an officiating-related trip to a vacation spot such as Hawaii!
- Maintain a spreadsheet of income (at least amount and date paid) and expenses by tax category for each match assignment or officiating activity. Keeping it current saves a lot of scrambling at tax time.
- Maintain a yearly folder of officiating receipts and supporting documents. When in doubt, save it.
- Carry a manual or automated daily planner with the pertinent info of all your assignments.
- Confirm each assignment with your assigner and partner. There's nothing like showing up for a match and no one else is there.
- Carry a list of phone numbers for your assigners and fellow officials. Have a cell phone, phone card, or coins available.

#### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- Appearances matter. A clean, crisp, immaculate uniform creates a good first and lasting impression. A threadbare or discolored uniform shirt won't pass muster.
- Transport your official's shoes and clothing in protective bags to your match site to keep them fresh.
- Have a regular shirt to wear after the match in case a social opportunity comes up.
- Have a double-sided sticky Velcro strip handy to hold your official's patch onto your shirt in emergencies. It works better than a pin.
- Have pencil and black/blue pen to serve as supplies backup for the scorekeeper.
- A film canister with a slit on top or a squeeze-open flat plastic coin purse is a convenient container for the net measuring chain. Winding the chain for storage is a good way to get it

tangled. A better way is to let it drop in bead by bead.

- Every so often wash your whistles with warm water and baking soda.
- Every so often launder your white whistle lanyard with bleach. Dry it right away so its metal parts won't rust.
- Never loan out the whistles you use. Carry a spare, disposable one for that purpose.
- Whistles can damage your hearing. Stay low profile in color, shape and use if you decide to wear earplugs or noise reducers. A good time to put them on is when the teams huddle at the end of warm-ups and before you walk to your post. Do not wear them if you cannot hear normal conversation with them on, especially as an R2 where you have to interact with the coaches and scorekeeper. If you cannot find an appropriate model to wear, experiment with shortened lengths of a foam type until you find an effective size. Cutting off a fourth or a third of it and placing it looser in your ear might work. In the absence of hearing protection, turn your whistle upside down during use. This also prevents the pea from sticking in an old-fashioned whistle.
- Right after the coin toss in the captains' meeting, put the tossing coin in a pocket on the side of the serving team.
- Keep red and yellow cards hidden and separate for easy retrieval. R in R is easy to remember, i.e., red in pants right pocket, yellow in pants left pocket. A card placed in the shirt pocket could become exposed, which sets a negative tone.

## **MATCH EQUIPMENT**

- The net can be cranked tight only so high. Further cranking could bend the poles inward or snap the top cable (*oops!*). If the net height has to go higher, raise the bottom net cables. If that doesn't work, have the poles raised and the bottom net cables may need to be pulled down for the right net height.
- Toss a ball into the middle and bottom of the net along its entire court width to check if the net is tight enough for playing a ball going into the net.
- Place the antennas on the side of the net away from the strong side hitter. Secure them more by weaving through the net.
- Use your net measuring chain to plumb the antennas.
- Put a distinct mark, e.g., your initials, at the needle hole of a game ball after checking its pressure. It will be easier to find if it gets mixed with other balls.
- Get up on the referee stand to be sure it's a comfortable height for you.
- Keep a towel up on the referee stand, not on the bottom net cable. It will not be in the line judge's line of vision and can be tossed to the players when needed to wipe the floor.

## **TEAMWORK**

- Juniors players like to be line judges when flags are used.
- Brief all the line judges for the entire match en masse. Make it short and sweet. You lose their attention fast.
- No matter how thorough your briefing is, the line judges will be only as good as you make them. Keep them in the match with you as an R1. Prompt a line judge for a signal whenever none is given. Make eye contact with the line judges even on obvious calls.
- Work together with your partner during pre-match activities. Do not do your partner's job. Instead give a gentle reminder if the job is not getting done.
- Make a nature call before the match, even if you feel you don't need one. If it's during pre-match proceedings, take turns with your partner so that at least one of you is monitoring the court at all times.
- Serve and protect your partner during the match.

## **TEAMS & LINEUPS**

- Watch the players during warm-ups. Identify the outside hitters, middle hitters, opposite hitters and their hitting tendencies. See if there are any peculiar techniques by the setters.
- Study each team's submitted lineup before the match to identify at least the setter's position and the player opposite the setter. Note who the captains are and the positions of the opposing teams' setters relative to each other.
- As an R2, holding onto the ball during the lineup check of players on the court makes it clumsy to signal the captain's number to the R1. Either give the ball to the server right away or retrieve it from the scorekeeper table after checking the lineups.
- While the R2 is checking the lineups before the start of each game, study each team's rotation, especially the setter and the player opposite the setter.
- Before the serve, after checking the receiving team for possible overlaps as an R2, note the serving team's front row players in service order. After a side out, the passing formation of that team will be less confusing when looking for overlaps.
- If you miss calling an overlap at time of serve, make a mental note of the situation and catch it on the next go-around. If an overlap is called at the end of a play, there will be denials and arguments because the supporting evidence is gone.

## **MATCH CONTROL & SANCTIONS**

- Take action to prevent a team from being sanctioned or penalized. For example, check for jewelry during warm-ups.

- Take action to prevent a potential problem from becoming one. For example, if no libero is indicated on the submitted lineup, verify with the coach if that is correct. Make sure the libero wears a shirt of contrasting colors to teammates before the match starts.
- Establish a working rapport with the coaches as an R2. Let them coach so long they're not disruptive. Make sure the coaches submit their lineups to you and not the scorekeeper. Fetch the lineups instead of making the coach walk. If applicable, inform coaches without being asked when there is a minute left for serving in their warm-up period. Anticipate a time out request and look for a coach's subtle signal requesting one. Know when a substitution request is coming up. Warn the coach of a possible overlap. Be approachable for questioning. Explain all questioned calls.
- Control the teams' behavior. Address each act of misconduct, no matter how slight. Otherwise things can get out of hand real fast. Give a whistle warning toot and cautionary hand motion to a harmless, venting of frustration by a player.
- Be approachable as an R1 but only by the playing captains. Remind the captain of this when a teammate discusses a call with you.
- Clear all players away from your stand when talking to the R2 or line judges on a controversial call. Letting your conversation be overheard adds fuel to the fire when your final decision is made.
- At the end of the play, don't look at your signals. Watch the net for possible misconduct by the players before resuming your other duties.
- There is no formal signal for an improper request sanction. One way the R1 and R2 can communicate this sanction to each other is the sign language "R", i.e., middle finger crossed over index finger.
- With rally scoring, it pays dividends to check that the scoreboard is correct after every play.
- Smile. Everyone will react more favorably to a smile.

## **PLAY ACTIONS**

- Most illegal plays at the net (excluding net and center line violations) will involve the receiving team's setter on an overpass of the serve. After beckoning for serve as an R1, check the location of the receiving team's setter so it's fresh in your mind. Make sure to return your view back to the server before the serve is made.
- Don't follow the flight of ball as an R1 after it goes above your eye level. Look ahead to where the ball is headed to identify who will handle the ball and watch the hitters approach. You will get more reaction time to judge ball handling and a better picture of the overall action.
- "Ugly" is not a ball handling violation. Don't judge on looks or body positions. Don't make a call just because a player or the ball did not do what you expected.
- Focus in on the player's body parts contacting the ball for whether the ball came to a stop,

was held, or double contacted. Nothing else.

- Use rapid eye movements as an R1 during a spike: hitter, net, defense. Watch the hitter making ball contact. As soon as the hit is completed, focus on the net for possible touches of the ball by the blockers and net violations. Skipping this step reduces input for making a call. After the ball passes the blockers, find the defensive player who will be playing the ball.
- When a spike hits the top of the net and rebounds back, quickly look to your R2 for input on whether the blockers contacted the ball as play continues.
- When there's a possibility the ball may have gone by the antenna illegally or hit it, quickly look to the line judges for input as play continues. Don't get fooled by a spike that nicks the top of the net as it passes close to the antenna. It will have the same sound and effect as a ball nicking the antenna. Check with the line judge.
- On a power tip (not to be confused with a soft tip), the spiker's hand should already be moving forward before contacting the ball. If not, the ball was caught before the forward motion. Be alert for a flinging motion during contact.
- On a spike close to you as an R1, the ball could ricochet off the blockers toward you. Ducking doesn't always work. Use the antenna as a shield. Your first reflex should be to protect your face with a hand so the ball won't six-pack you (*ow!*) or bash the whistle into your mouth (*OUCH!!*).

## END OF MATCH

- After a hotly contested match, stay at your post to guard against any shenanigans while the players and coaches shake hands.
- Quickly perform your administrative duties and hightail out of the area. The people more likely to talk to you will be the unhappy ones.

These officiating pearls of wisdom have been gleaned from years of lessons learned and are still functional for today's game. Although several are personal practices and not standard procedure, it won't hurt to consider them all. You might find some of these trade tricks are worth adopting for your own use.