

# Respect in Sports

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A monthly newsletter for everyone interested in supporting a positive youth sports experience.



The Sports Alliance of Minnesota is a coalition of sports organizations whose mission is to provide tools for creating a positive sports environment.

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## OFFICIALS—SAVE THE DATE!



Officiate Minnesota—  
Educate, Recognize,  
Celebrate  
July 24, 2010

National Association  
of Sports Officials  
Annual Summit  
July 25-27, 2010

Marriot City Center  
Hotel, Minneapolis

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## A Dozen Ideas for Officials and Others

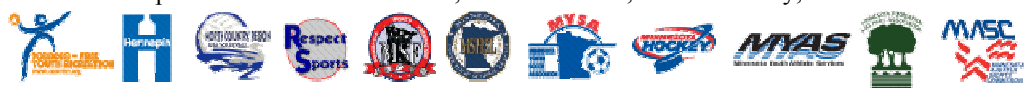
By Steve Olson, SAM Board Member and retired international soccer referee

One of the hallmarks of outstanding sports programs is strong central administration. One of the best examples of demonstrating this to participants, coaches and spectators is to have a well organized officiating program where BOTH the administrators and officials are vested in providing quality. To that end, a few bits of advice to officials, administrators and any coaches or fans who might, hopefully, read this...

- 1. Know the Written Rules-**There is no option in this area and unfortunately many officials and most spectators are not fully up to par when it comes to having the rules down cold. What are the infractions and how are they dealt with? As an official you must know. You must also always work to prevent technical errors by the misapplication of rules.
- 2. Understand the Rules-** Ever heard this statement about learning; Hear it...forget it, Read it...remember it, Do it...understand it. Referees need to “do” the rules. This starts by reading them completely, as above, and ends in applying them for the **reason** they were written. It may seem contrary to the previous statement, but the rulebook can be your best friend and your worst enemy. Understanding the origin of a rule is the clearest way to know when and why to apply it. Researching the rules of your sport makes you a better official and gives you a learning opportunity to talk with the old timers about history.
- 3. Read the Casebook-**Application and explanation of the rules will be found here. Casebooks are the physical representation of the fact that everything can use a little extra info sometimes.
- 4. Know the Rules of Competition-**Not all the rules you need to know are found in the rulebook. Typically leagues and tournaments will have special rules regarding the size of a roster, when teams can sub, how many time-outs they may use, or how many games they can play in one day. Ask before you start your first game.
- 5. Control the Level of Violence-** The level of violence in sport is perceived by many to be on the rise. Control this issue! Protect players! In cases where a player’s intentions are to injure another player, do not hesitate to remove that player from the contest. Many acts of violence go unpunished simply because of a lack of courage on the part of the referee.

Story continued on next page.

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## A Dozen Ideas for Officials and Others, continued

6. **The Spirit of the Game**—directs referees to provide and protect an environment, for all participants, which is safe, balanced, and enjoyable. You will not find this written anywhere in the rulebook, yet it is a guiding principle of officiating. Referees must intervene in cases where the actions of spectators rise to the point of ruining the game for the participants. The participants always come first.
7. **Speaking of Spectators**—The act of officiating is hard enough by itself, yet many referees force themselves into situations that were never meant to be controlled by a referee, or are simply uncontrollable. The perception spectators have of officials is probably the best example of the uncontrollable. Any attempt to directly control the **attitude** of spectators toward the referee will backfire. The most effective control of the “fan” is to do a good job. Even then, you will never be fully absolved from criticism. Many spectators “enjoy” the ability to criticize the referee. Based on their “thorough knowledge” of the rules, some spectator’s harassment falls into the comical category. Remember that words only have power if YOU give them power. Have a thick skin, but don’t allow spectators to ruin it for the players.
8. **Look the Part**—Shine your shoes, brush your teeth, comb your hair, stand up straight, pull up your socks, tuck in your shirt...all those things your mother tried to get you to do! You will be treated based on what you appear to be.
9. **Act the Part**—Have confidence in your decisions. Blow the whistle and/or signal with authority. Get players to believe in your ability to manage the game. If you must make mistakes (and we must), make them with confidence and authority...then move on. Linger-ing on a mistake is itself a mistake.
10. **Do the Paperwork**—Your job ends when the report goes in. Make sure administrators have proper and accurate information regarding games you officiate. Such information must include the score, who won, disciplinary reports, injury reports and a written explanation of any unusual or irregular circumstances (e.g. the game is not played to completion due to the weather or spectator interference).
11. **Watch Others**—Officiating is all about managing players and the environment of the game. Every sport has different, but equally effective techniques to achieve this result. Many of the best tips you receive during your career may come from other sports.
12. **Enjoy**—If you like what you do, the players will know it. Ninety minutes or nine innings are a very short time when you are having fun. It is an eternity when you are calculating your hourly income.



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