

Working Effectively with Coaches: Cooperation, Not Confrontation

From my side (HC) of the SL:

1. Be respectful at all times. Even if a coach is losing his mind, you stay respectful. (Editor's Note: Don't take coaches comments personally, but address his comments. Apply appropriate warnings &/or penalties when warranted.) This is his JOB, his livelihood, & how he puts food on his table. For you, it's an avocation. He has an extremely vested interest in the outcome, & isn't going to see things in an unbiased manner. Stay above it; you don't care who wins or loses. It's great to say we are all there for the same thing, for the kids to have a fair game & learn. That simply isn't true. He wants the kids to learn something & WIN. So right away, you have different goals.

2. Introduce yourself to him before the game. Know his name, & use it. Make sure he knows your name. You call him "Coach Smith", he can call you "Ed". Smile! I'm not saying you have to tell jokes, but there is nothing worse than an official who won't smile, laugh, or show a human side. Have a little fun while being out there. Let him know you appreciate being asked to work his game & to be there, & show that you enjoy being there. Be excited. If you treat it like a burden you have to get through, that's exactly what it will become. To paraphrase from another sport, a bad night on the FB field beats a good day at the office anytime.

3. Ask for his help, don't demand it. Ask, don't tell, him to help you keep the SL clear so you can safely call the game. Let him know you are trying to stay out of the way of the players, not demanding space just because it's "yours". Just listen to these 2 statements:

A. Coach, you need to stay out of the restricted area because that area is for the officials.

B. Coach, could you help us keep the restricted area clear so we can work off the field & stay out of the way of your players? The first one creates confrontation that isn't necessary. The second creates cooperation, & explains why that's important, with a benefit for him.

4. If staff is being cooperative, keeping players back, & staying out of your way then: A. Thank them; B. Don't worry about technical violations between plays when it isn't as important, such as more than 3 coaches in the restricted area, or a coach stepping 2 yards on field to signal a play (in other words, pick your battles). If they are out of your way when it's important, then it's a good night.

5. If an assistant is being a "challenge", tell the HC, & give him the first chance to take care of it. If the assistant is being respectful & asks a question, answer him. Don't play the "I only talk to HC card as long as everyone is respectful."

6. If there is a get back coach, & there should be, know him & use him. The HC has 47 things going on at the same time. Listening to you isn't going to be his priority. For the get back coach, listening to you should be his priority.

7. Know Game Management Personnel & use them. Believe me; the HC doesn't care if a photographer is too close to the SL down by the GL. And it's not his problem, that's a game management issue. Don't bother the HC with it, contact the Game Manager. (6/1/17)

Cooperation, not confrontation!

Written by: Joe Sturniolo.

NOTE: Parts of article are paraphrased for language. Editor's Note: Comments by Beau & Bruce