

Communication with Coaches

Principles in Basketball Officiating
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Key Principles

1. Defuse and De-escalate
2. Listen
3. Validate
4. Review



- **POE: Communication with Coaches**

- **Mutual Expectations Officials/Coaches**
Basketball high intensity game, energy is up, emotions are up. Expect coaches attitude to match



- Officials need to improve Communication skills. Treat it the same as improving our mechanics, positioning and rules knowledge



- Lot at stake for players, coaches, schools and communities



- Coaches do NOT expect perfection

- Coaches DO expect consistency

- **Defuse and De-escalate:** Reduce tension, Disarming/Non threatening
- **Verbal and Non-verbal Cues**
- **Verbal:** Professional and polite, calm, neutral tone and volume. Silence when appropriate (answer questions/not statements). Coaches by name if possible, avoid inflammatory comments (“Not my call” “You’re wrong” “Sit Down”)
- **Non-Verbal:** Neutral stance, avoid negative body language (folding arms, hands on hips, shaking head, rolling your eyes or pointing directly at coach)
- **Other Non-Verbals:** Mechanics, hustle, positioning, proper attire, fitness level
- **Verbal/Non-Verbal:** Both promote your professional readiness, help defuse situations and communicate to coaches that you are ready and qualified to officiate

- **Listen:** Not everything a coach says needs a response. Often they just want to vent, let them
- All Coaches want to be heard and acknowledged. Questions should have an answer
- All Coaches are entitled to be heard. Make the effort. Defuses frustration, No “rabbit ears”
- **Validate:** Short statements that acknowledge what a coach just said was heard/has merit (“OK”, “I hear you” “I understand” “We’ve got that same call at the other end” “Lets move on, ball’s coming in play”)
- **Review Play/Call:** Focus on play, not on the coach. Only when ball is dead/after fouls/FT’s
- Review Call: Use Rule Book terminology. (“Extended arm bar on post player with the ball” “Screener was outside body frame/vertical space”)

- **Defuse and De-escalate:** Pre-Game/In Game
- Pre-Game with Partners: Good pre-game, talk about ways to defuse situations. Get it right. Primary is secondary= (Focused on Primary/Always observing entire court)
- Give info to your partners if you have it. Get together. Get it right (tip OOB, time out before foul or violation, etc.)
- Do not miss obvious/blatant fouls/violations: Two hand shove, elbow to the stomach, basket interference, backcourt violation etc.) Trust partner in their primary but these are must gets.
- If no whistle, Assume your partner was straight-lined or not it a position to see call. Come in and get it
- Quality pre-game discussion will defuse many in game situations



- Defuse/De-escalate: In Game

- Game awareness; Identify best players on the court. Be alert to player and team foul counts. (3rd foul before half/ Disparity in team totals 8/1 etc.)
- Talk in pre-game about game management. Look for opportunities to be a consistent crew. Prioritize succeeding fouls or violations that help defuse these situations. Look for contact (hand checks/bumping cutters) or see violations before fouls
- Prevent escalation: Rough play, hard fouls, taunting, contact after whistle, hate speech etc.= ADDRESS IT RIGHT NOW. Zero tolerance, whistle=Call the appropriate foul
- Players dictate number of fouls, not officials. Care about the consistency of calls not the number
- Other ways to defuse in game: Go opposite bench (if needed) Same official makes back to back foul calls on one team, Tech called or controversial play.
- Live ball communication with coaches: Avoid it. Ball will be dead soon enough. Never from Lead, Never from across the floor, Never while ball in your primary
- Only time (use limited) Center/Trail bench side, ball not in primary. Validate only

- **Defuse/De-escalate: Assistant Coaches**
- Communicate with Assistants. Can help defuse. Between quarters/Time out (good opportunity)
- Assistant Coaches may stand; React to play/Sub enters or returns/fight has or may break out
- Head Coach responsible for all bench personnel= give them a chance to be. Let head coach know if issue with an assistant or other bench personnel. Tech on bench is an indirect on head coach, loss of coaching box, 2 shots/ball-possible 4-6pt play/swing=Huge penalty
- Bench Warning/Technical: Bench warning is a good De-escalation tool. Use it. Often has same intended result, a lot less penalty. Coach/bench decorum usually improves after official warning
- Bench Warning not same as Team Warning (Delay). Each team get one of each per game
- Bench Warning/Technical: Officials should use all De-escalation skills prior to either penalty

