

CYA delegate Report

Sports Officials of Canada Conference, Sept. 21-23, 2012

The Conference emphasized the similarities among officials and officiating in all sports. Race Officers and Judges at all levels are officials as defined at this Conference. Recruitment and retention are universal issues. Both National and Provincial Sports Governing Bodies (NSGBs, PSGBs) need to plan for recruitment of new officials, training and mentoring of new officials, evaluation of officials, development and improvement of active officials, retention of officials, and, in some sports, planned retirement of officials.

Each session dealt with particular aspects of the above topics. This report will not attempt to present a synthesis but will summarize the most important points.

- Recruiting and retention of officials is a problem for all sports. Various issues that cause officials to quit have been identified including low pay, high expenses, abuse at events, excessive travel, liability, lack of opportunity for advancement, favouritism in assignments, politics of the organization, time away from family or work, lack of feedback on performance, poor training clinics, lack of attention from NSGBs or PSGBs to officials at lower levels, not being valued and unequal access to resources.
- The same psychological principles and techniques currently applied to athlete and coach development should be taught in preparing officials (e.g. focussing, verbal and nonverbal communication, mental rehearsal, goal-setting, optimum arousal, anger management, dealing with emotions, self-image, self-reminders, conflict resolution, projected image).
- Clinics should include training in such things as stress management, decision making, relationships with coaches and athletes, communication, conflict management, official's philosophy and preparation for competition. For example, Sports Quebec has developed an 8 module program providing training in these areas. This program is being used in Quebec and other jurisdictions. Other provinces have expressed their interest in using it.
- Long Term Athlete Development has been emphasized, but Long Term Official Development has not.
- Training of officials is more than learning the rules and technical aspects of the sport.
- Clinics for officials should be conducted on the field of play, as well as in the classroom, so that officials can engage in supervised practice of skills and techniques. Officials need the opportunity to practice outside competition, just as athletes do.
- Techniques, as well as technical aspects, should be taught.
- Sports culture is shifting towards increasing communication with athletes, rather than the official as "boss".
- Some sports are aware of "have-not" provinces in terms of officials' development. From a national perspective, this is not desirable.

- Officials at all levels and in all locations should have opportunities to develop to as high a level as they wish.
- Some sports have surveyed coaches and athletes to determine which aspects of officiating are most important to them and then emphasized those aspects in training novice officials.
- NSGBs and PSGBS should build in to their officials training and practise the habits of pre-event and post-event analysis. This should involve discussion among the officials who work the event as well as individual reflection and personal plans for improvement. The focus should be planning for success and correction of problems encountered.
- Retention may involve factors such as mentorship, supervisory support, social spaces for interaction, chances to excel and developing a feeling of significance within the sport.
- Officials control and supervise the competition in order to provide the athletes with the fairest and safest opportunity to participate.
- Officials must model appropriate behaviour, emotional control and positive attitudes.
- New technology should be welcomed. Examples include videotaping for instant or later replay and location transponders. Experimentation is necessary to determine practicality and usefulness compared to cost. A related topic is the need for policies regarding how officials are allowed to use social media such as Facebook and Twitter, in regard to both specific competitions and aspects of their personal lives which might affect their effectiveness on the field of play.
- To ensure the future of Canadian sport, NSGBs and PSGBs must ensure the development of their officials. Planning and commitment are required.
- Officials enter their roles for different reasons and at different times in their sporting careers. In order to recruit and retain them, it will be necessary to get a better understanding of why they start out, why they continue and why they quit. More research is necessary. A useful and interesting survey is being carried out by S. L. Forbes and L. Livingston of Lakehead University on behalf of the Long Term Officiating Development (LTOD) Committee. This survey is intended for all officials, including CYA Race Officers and Judges. The primary objective of this study is to understand why individuals choose to be sports officials and why they remain sports officials. The survey may be found at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s_pass.aspx?sm=Tc3VG0JOk0hSbLZFboNSxQ%3d%3d. The password is **Officiating** (please be sure to capitalize the word)
- Athletes, coaches and officials are all essential for sport. All three must be developed by SGBs.

Respectfully submitted,

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