

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

WHAT HAS CHANGED, WHAT HAS NOT



Thirty years ago, I was a Social Studies teacher, football coach, baseball coach and athletic director at Lakewood High School in the Long Beach Unified School District. In November, 1992, I was invited by the Long Beach Football Officials Association to speak at their end of season banquet. At first, I was a little apprehensive to accept as I had some difficult moments with football officials when I began my coaching career. As a younger coach, my attitude toward officials was mixed. I truly appreciated them for being there and recognized that we could not play our games without them, but there were instances that I honestly thought certain officials carried a bias against us or did things intentionally to negatively affect our team. I am not proud of the perception that I carried with me at that time, but it was where I was coming from, and probably not unusual for young coaches to feel that

way, or in some instances, even veteran coaches who believed that was the case. Knowing that some of the officials that I would see that night were not fans of mine left me with an uneasy feeling, but I went ahead and agreed to come and speak to them. My topic for the evening was to share the expectations of officials that I had as an athletic director and coach and attempt to summarize the expectations that I thought officials had when they came to my school to work a contest.

Here is what I said were our expectations at the school site...

- 1) Be Reliable – Be on time, be prepared and be ready to go.
- 2) Player Safety – Ensure that the game will be played with player safety as the highest priority.
- 3) Be Consistent – Set the standards for what will be acceptable for both teams, call it both ways.
- 4) Communicate – Let us know what we need to do to be proactive and avoid penalties/issues.



As for expectations I thought officials had for our school site...

- 1) Safety – A place to park, a secure place to meet/dress, someone to escort them to/from the field.
- 2) Respect/Sportsmanship – Coaches and players under control, allow officials to officiate.
- 3) Administrative Supervision – When needed, administrators immediately available for support.
- 4) Payment – Processed in a timely manner and the checks do not bounce.

As I review what I said that night, has anything changed? I would say no, we should all have the same expectations today that existed then, and everyone should be committed to upholding them.

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With that said, what has changed? I remember walking into the banquet room that night and being surprised with what I saw. There were wives and girlfriends there supporting the officials. I thought to myself, these are normal people who lead normal lives outside of officiating. I did not know that! I really learned something that night and saw a different side of who officials are off the field. As I continued my journey as an athletic director, my views on officials were clearly changing. I realized even more how much they were there to serve our student-athletes and our schools, not to try and influence the outcome of a game or favor one team over another. Moving on to an Assistant Commissioner position, then becoming Commissioner of Athletics for our organization, and being involved on a much larger



scale, it only deepened my appreciation for our officials and what they do in all geographic areas of our section. I was aware of the officials who worked in the Long Beach area and Orange County area where I had been, but now I was able to see so many other officials from all over our section who were doing outstanding work. The CIF Southern Section relies on them to officiate our biggest games, with the highest stakes possible, and they take great pride in doing an excellent job in fulfilling that role. These experiences have changed the attitude I previously had about officials when I started, and I am grateful for that.

Another example of my evolution in the world of officiating is I am currently serving a two-year term on the National Association of Sports Officials Board of Directors. I attended my first meeting last week in Chicago and sat in a room with some of the biggest names who work at the very highest levels possible in professional sports, the Olympic Games, NCAA Divisions I, II and III, as well as leaders in high school state associations. All of them are dedicated to supporting officiating in any way possible and giving back to those who follow in their footsteps. I find it ironic that the same guy who began coaching those many years ago with a not so positive perception of officials is now sitting on the board of the leading official's association in our country. I am proud to be able to be involved with NASO at that level and looking forward to doing all I can to advocate for officials from that platform.



A few weeks ago, I was invited back to the Long Beach Football Officials Association end of season banquet to speak again. Two nights ago, I found myself in front of them 30 years after I had been there the last time. My message was identical to the one I gave before about expectations from both groups, and that remains unchanged today. However, my perspective regarding officials has been transformed forever. What I take away from this is that we can all change when we are willing to learn, willing to listen and willing to be open-minded, while always remembering that the education process never stops.

Thank you very much for your continued help and support, it is truly appreciated.

All the best,

Rob Weigle

