



CORNY'S CORNER

Are You Ready For Prime Time

Corny Galdones, March 2005

Anyone with a general idea of the sport and knowledge of the rules can blow a whistle and claim to be a volleyball referee. Upper echelon referees have to do better. Much better. The following assessment will give an aspiring referee a good gauge of being ready to move up the ladder. This technical checklist, which may be useful to all, isn't inclusive. Performance standards of local jurisdictions aren't covered.

- Can you cite chapter and verse of every rule? Do your common sense and "spirit of the rule" prevail over "going by the book"?
- Are you a continuing student of the game? Are you familiar with every current player technique and skill? Defensive and offensive team strategies and alignments?
- Are you a true professional? Do you give back? Do you know right from wrong in perceptions? Can you be trusted to do right? Do assignments select you and not the opposite? Are you faithful to your commitments? Are you candid when a better offer comes up? Are your uniform and appearance spic and span? Do you treat everyone with respect? Do you talk business only at work and eliminate social talk? Do you take care of all the little match details? Are you an ambassador of your organization and our profession, and not a misfit or malcontent? Are you low maintenance?
- Are you a hard worker? Do you work as much as possible? Do you pitch in? Is getting the job done more a concern than getting credit? Are you punctual in match procedures for reporting prepared to courtside and for the first service beckon to start a match?
- Do you have a commanding presence that sells your calls? Are your signals not only mechanically correct, but also strong and crisp? Is your whistle prompt and authoritative in sound? Does your body language project "I know what I'm doing," class, and no ego?
- Are you a facilitator and not a rules dictator? Do you create a positive environment for everyone involved to enjoy what's going on?
- Are you battle tested? Are you court wise? Have you been raked over the coals countless times by players and coaches to know how to handle any situation under fire quickly and properly in a calm manner?
- Are you at ease officiating the highest competition level? Does the speed of the action appear in slow motion? Do you act by instinct and reflex instead of thinking about it?
- Have you worked matches galore to have a comfortable and correct ball-handling standard? Is it consistent throughout a match? Do you judge ugly or awkward plays on actual contact and not on looks? Do you differentiate legal ball spin from illegal ball spin? Have you stopped making automatic calls and out of the blue calls that draw "What was that call about?" responses? Are all the violations being called?

- Are you catching all violations besides ball handling violations?
- Are you invisible? Are your errors few and far between, and not same ones as before?
- Are you approachable to explain calls? Are these talks short and sweet? Do you think fast and placate the different but common questions that may be asked? Do you when and how to cut off ongoing conversations? Do you do it with tact and finality?
- Do you take preventive control measures? Do you recognize the difference between venting of frustrations and abusive behavior? Do your matches rarely get out of hand? If they ever do, do you regain control at once? Can you do it without sanction cards?
- Are you a team player and communicator and not a Lone Ranger? Do you coordinate duties with your R1/R2 partner and line judges before the match, have them do their jobs and solicit their input with eye contact throughout the match? Do you treat them plus the scorekeeper as your equal?
- As an R1 and R2, do you know all the places to look and what to look for before a serve? During a rally? At the end of a play? During warm-ups? Before start of a game? Are you seeing and not just glancing?
- As an R2, do you know where to be positioned and are you getting there in time before a serve? During a rally? At the end of a play? For bench requests? Do you minimize damage from coaches disputing calls and not let the R1 hang out to dry? Do you resolve scorekeeping problems promptly if the scorekeeper needs help?
- As an R1 and R2, do you know what hand (and maybe whistle) signals to make and how to display them for specific situations during a rally? For a violation? At the end of a play? For sanctions? For match interruptions? For bench requests?
- Can you track player rotations and quickly detect an overlap no matter what formations the teams are in?
- Do you keep your matches moving at a lively pace regardless of playing caliber? Have you stopped from causing match delays?
- Do you continue to learn and grow? Do you recognize and admit your weaknesses? Do you accept criticism without having to defend or explain yourself? Are you listening instead of hearing? Do you implement suggestions and advice right away and not get messed up? Are you getting better?

This isn't a pass/fail questionnaire. It might not be a bad idea to consult a frank, learned colleague. Your skills must be developed so that every answer is "yes" to these criteria similar to the formal evaluation process. Here's the bottom line. Would each and every referee be confident and willing to have you as a partner for any given match, including the big one?

You can fool yourself, but not the expert raters who will determine your fate in being promoted to the next officiating certification level. Why take chances? Scrutinize yourself. Where are you now? What ideals must you still strive for? Be honest and realistic for the good of one person. You.