

# Coaches Weigh In

Tips from college coaches can apply to all levels of officiating

By Steven Hinchey



**R**ecently, a collegiate officials district held its preseason clinic and invited three college coaches (representing NCAA Divisions I, II and III) to address the officials. They responded to a series of prepared questions regarding the coach-official relationship.

Their comments were as varied as their locations and competition. But, some common themes did arise from their comments and can apply to all levels of officiating.

### Appearance

The coaches agreed that passing the eye test was important. You only have one chance to make a good impression. Coaches and players will respond well to appearance, demeanor and a cordial official. Remember to smile and have an appropriate sense of humor. It can help disarm conflicts.

### Confidence

Coaches are more impressed by an official who is clear about his ruling and gives the proper signals. Coaches get worried when they sense a nervous or scared official. They start to question the quality of his calls. Obviously, experience helps confidence, but when short on experience, knowing rules and mechanics and hooking up with good mentors can help in the short term.

### Composure

The ability to weather the storm, slow down and get the call right is important to coaches. They want the right call, not an arrogant call.

### Consistency

Within the game, coaches want calls called the same way for both teams, and for the entire game, no matter the score. Avoid officiating the score. Equally important is consistency from game to game. Each year, points of emphasis are made for consistent officiating. It is important to carry that throughout your officiating season.

### Communication

**Intra-crew communication.** Coaches and players get confused when crews are not communicating with each other or when they officiate on different pages. The crew chief must establish consistency for the crew.

**Official/coach communication.** It is critical to a smooth game. Unlike past practice, officials should not totally ignore assistant coaches. As long as an assistant is respectful, answer his questions. Coaches should only

be ignored when they have earned being ignored. Avoid being antagonistic with phrases like "shut up." When a coach is close to the line, communicate "that's enough, coach" calmly, and when the line is crossed, use appropriate officiating tools. Above all, avoid giving one coaching staff more attention than the other.

**Official/player communication.** Some coaches do not want officials to talk with players at all. Certainly, do not threaten a player. Rather, ask the coach to control a player; let the coach get the player off. Good coaches want to help — it saves them a man down. Let them help.

### Mobility

Coaches expect officials to cover that end line on a shot or contested loose ball. Being able to anticipate what is about to happen

is reflected in mobility. It is important to anticipate when a loose ball may be a transitional play and affect the trail official's mobility, or a contested missed shot that depends on the lead's mobility to cover the end line.

### Mechanics

If you don't see it, don't throw a flag or blow the whistle. Coaches get upset with phantom calls — loose-ball pushes or holds that are not really there. Let the loose ball continue as long as there is no disadvantage. Avoid reaching for a flag before a play has occurred.

These are tips from college coaches who have seen a lot of games, and a lot of officials. But these comments can help you in a game of any level. **LM**



For more educational materials for officials, or if you're interested in becoming a men's lacrosse official, visit [www.uslacrosse.org](http://www.uslacrosse.org) and click on "Education and Training." To suggest an officials education topic for a future "Stripes" column, e-mail [laxoid@cox.net](mailto:laxoid@cox.net).