



CORNY'S CORNER

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Corny Galdones, January 1998

Not being remembered is the highest compliment you could receive for officiating a match. That means the teams and the playing action were featured. You did not draw any attention to yourself for contested decisions or overt deeds others recall. You achieved the ultimate of being an invisible facilitator. Consider it a job well done.

Match objectives. The various groups have their own reasons for being at a match. Each team is there for the spirit of competition and to win the match with assurances its opponent does not gain any unfair advantage of the rules. The spectators are there for the enjoyment of the athletic competition. Neither team nor spectators are there to watch the officials perform. You are there as an official in a working relationship with the teams to unobtrusively conduct the match in accordance with the rules.

Applying the rules. Every official is required to know the rules. Flaunting this rules knowledge invariably proves disruptive and alienates the coaches and players. Instead of strictly enforcing the rule book, understand rules are intended as guidelines. Learn when it is appropriate and necessary to apply them. First and foremost, use common sense and take preventive measures. Bear in mind correctness, consistency, and diplomacy promote acceptance of your decisions without incident. Orchestrate the competition with precision and fairness without hindering the teams with insignificant or incorrect rulings.

Interrupting play. As volleyball evolves as a power game, the players are being taxed more to keep the ball in play and sustain rallies for viewing interest and excitement. Be sensitive of this and use your leverage as an official to help the sport develop. Let the players' athletic performances decide the outcome of each rally. Work at being a non-factor in the outcome by interfering the flow of action as little as possible. Do not impose unless something of serious consequence happens. If it's marginal on whether to make a call, give benefit to the player in question and be a catalyst for continuing action. In essence, let 'em play (without overlooking gross infractions).

Going unnoticed. The smooth, silent operation of a match is an excellent barometer of the job you did. Be low-profile, evenhanded arbiter in behavior and performance. Leave the limelight to the teams and the playing action. However, if you do not always succeed in this ideal, make sure it's for doing something right and not for doing something improper, conspicuous, or impeding. Socializing with the teams, showboating, and court chattering fall in the latter category.

An official efficiently running the show with limited intrusion is a competent, understanding facilitator who unassumingly supports the players and their athleticism in being the main attractions of a match. Staying out of sight and out of mind are worthy professional goals when officiating any match.