



CORNY'S CORNER

Time Matters

Corny Galdones, May 2006

10:00 PM! What am I doing here? To my brethren who officiated ahead of me today taking your sweet time, I thank thee. May your roommate saw a forest tonight.

Being stuck at an ungodly hour doesn't make for happy campers. Granted, we can't do anything about how the players play or the scheduled match times. Everything else, we certainly can. Better court management of our matches is all it takes.

Start right to end right. For everyone's sake, please show up on time at courtside. Then take care of business instead of chatting and goofing around. Are the playing and officiating setups safe and proper? What about the team benches, court perimeter and the administrivia?

The time allotted before matches is for teams to warm up, not for us officials to get our acts together. The clock starts as soon as the previous match ends. Our captains' powwow, coaches' hello, line judges' briefing, work partner talk, paperwork and pit stops take up time. Move things along by conducting this rigmarole not before, not after, but while warm-up occurs. Watch the clock. Dilly-dallying won't earn us any smiles from our bosses, just grief.

So what if our match begins five minutes late? Big deal! Well, it really is. Lost time is hard to catch up. Suppose there are ten matches for that court and each warm-up period takes five minutes extra. By day's end, we're 50 minutes behind. Even Cinderella might beat us home. Can a match start earlier than scheduled? Depends. Sometimes, asking for forgiveness rather than permission will work. Wink, wink.

Delays happen. Still, we can prevent them. Clear the playing surface of riffraff, human or otherwise, that could stop play. Protests and disputed calls are bugaboos. Resolve them pronto. Know the rules, issue firm answers and limit replays. Crew get-togethers are another source of concern. Use signals to save time. Also, visits by the second referee to the first referee are by invitation only.

Players feed off our officiating tempo. If our sounds are slow, they'll lollygag. Liven up the music. This doesn't mean to service beckon before the server crosses behind the back line. Scan during this time. Is the receiving team ready? Serving team? Work team? Once the server faces the court, beckon for serve. Eight seconds is eternity for a server to check the coach's sign, bounce the ball and make service contact. Don't waltz. Boogie!

Keep an eye out for stall tactics, especially after a string of points by the opponent. Sweat may need wiping off the floor. Shoelaces may become untied. A lineup check or number of time outs or subs taken may be requested. Players may dawdle into position for serve. Coincidences? Perhaps. Cut off what's deliberate. Then again, if it's a match of seniors, limping and wheezing, give them a break or else be prepared to administer CPR.

Time matters. Like falling dominoes, our matches running late affect those down the line. Think of our fellow officials who must turn off the lights at day's end. Let's rock and roll.