



CORNY'S CORNER

Professionalism

Corny Galdones, July 2003

Officials should not confuse being skilled and competent with being professional. Ability has little to do with professionalism. Professionalism is about character and conduct. It's about what an official does off the court. Regardless of ability, an official who is a class act is far more professional than an official primarily concerned with one's performance on the court. Apart from technical skills, the fitting personal characteristics listed below (not inclusive) must be cultivated to be professional. All, not just some, must be exercised. An official accomplished in all of these aspects is a true professional to revere and emulate.

Law-abiding citizen. This goes without saying. No further discussion is necessary on this leading trait.

Trustworthy. Like Diogenes, we're looking for an ethical person with sense and integrity. Know right from wrong and act accordingly. You are counted on to do the right thing without being told. Avoid situations that may be perceived to be conflicts of interest, improper, immoral or illegal. Be responsible for your actions. Police yourself.

Respectful. Practice the Golden Rule, not the Gold Rule, *i.e.*, he who has the gold rules. Be nice to everyone on your way up because you'll meet again on your way down. Work with and not against your peers. Look for and bring out the good (not the bad) in your working partners. Treat subordinates as your equals. Defer to superiors without being a sycophant. Value everything related to the sport for it's more important than you.

Dependable. Be independent but reliable. Be low maintenance and require little handholding or supervision. Like them or not, follow the regulations and procedures of your governing organizations. Don't be a maverick. Be a team player who is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty. When help is needed, pitch in, get your task done and do it right. Don't aggressively seek assignments, especially choice ones. Once you commit to an assignment, keep your word. Don't back out of it for a better assignment. This action is not only frowned upon, you'll fall out of favor with your assignors also. Show up for your matches and functions on time and prepared.

Sharp looking. Having the correct uniform and appearance are not enough. Be spic and span in your dress, grooming and demeanor. Avoid accessories, jewelry, hairstyles and mannerisms that draw attention.

All business. Act dignified and be conscientious at courtside. Don't lounge or clown around. Administer and tend to all match details before getting involved in secondary affairs. Take charge but be diplomatic and fair in your dealings. Be polite to coaches and players but don't schmooze or fraternize. Limit discussions with them to the match events. No chitchat or long conversations. Better yet, refrain altogether. Create rapport and a desirable reputation with coaches and players by doing a good job, not by socializing. Performance, not association, earns these merits.

Impartial. Base all officiating decisions on the court action, and not on favoritism or

knowledge of the players, coaches or teams.

Approachable. Be open and accommodating. Don't be condescending, overbearing or aloof. Don't know it all, be high and mighty, or dominate the spotlight. Be someone that others are not afraid or reluctant to engage in conversation. Invite interaction and listen to what others have to say. You may even learn and benefit as a result.

Supportive. Help and look out for one another. Be sensitive, encouraging, understanding and caring of each other. Show concern for up-and-coming officials and aid their growth. Protect and defend your fellow officials in public. Don't air out dirty laundry. Negative or critical comments about an official should be made one-on-one in private with that person or up the chain of command, else not said at all.

Professionalism consists of a core of suitable behavioral skills that an official must develop and polish along with technical skills. These two separate skill areas have to go hand in hand for one to be considered a complete official. An individual's talents will determine the eventual level of technical competency. On the other hand, all officials are on equal basis for becoming professional. It's a choice of applying oneself properly in attitude and conduct. Great officials are admired and respected not only for their excellent abilities, but for their classy professionalism as well. Aim to be great.