

COMMUNICATING WITH THE BOSS

(Tips for Communicating with your Supervisor)

The role of the supervisor at hockey games has been laid out to officials at various times and in various documents, but what are some of the unwritten rules or things a supervisor looks for in the course of conducting a supervision? Here's some tips for all officials.

TIP 1: Pay attention to what is being said.

When a supervisor takes the time to talk to the officials, there are various verbal and non verbal responses you provide to the supervisor that help him evaluate your state of mind, attentiveness and desire to improve.

For example, the supervisor comes into the dressing room after the game and begins to discuss various aspects of the game with you. During this time, you are busy taking off your gear, or getting dressed or unreceptive in other ways. What message does this send to the supervisor? The supervisor is not sure if you are more interested in getting changed and out of the arena as fast as possible, or in what they have to say. When the supervisor talks to you, pay attention, focus on what is being said, and show that you are interested and appreciate the time being taken by the supervisor to fine tune your game.

TIP 2: Avoid making the same mistakes that you made the last time you were supervised.

Nothing is more frustrating for a supervisor, then doing a supervision, and then seeing the same official in another game a short time later, making the same errors or using the wrong procedures that had been discussed previously. This sends one of two messages to the supervisor, either you didn't listen the previous time, or you don't want to make the change. Both are sure to reduce your value in the eyes of that supervisor.

TIP 3: Accept you may have made an error, and do not blame others for your mistakes.

Mistakes are bound to happen in a game. If the mistake is clearly yours, do not pass the buck by saying your partner or another official is to blame. Accept responsibility, determine why the error was made, and work towards not making the same mistake again. As well, supervisors will be concerned if an official has an answer for every point of concern, or consistently claims they did not see the particular play being discussed. A supervisor will consider this official an "excuse maker".

TIP 4: Do not add your comments to the supervisors when he is correcting another official.

When the supervisor is correcting the actions of a fellow official, keep quiet unless you are asked to provide your input. The last thing the official needs is someone else putting him down.

TIP 5: Do not blame another supervisor for how you officiate

From time to time, an official will tell the supervisor that he is doing something because that is what another supervisor told him. Ideally supervisors will be on the same page as far as what they expect, and occasionally there may be different interpretations between supervisors, or between what the one supervisor said and what the official thought they were saying. If this occurs, supervisors should discuss the area of concern and get back to the official with a clear explanation of what is expected. However, supervisors will be very concerned with an official who is consistently deflecting blame or cause to another supervisor.

TIP 6: Know who your boss is

The supervisor is there to ensure the game is being officiated in a “fair” and “safe” manner, and to standards set by the CHA and the Branch. Even though the game may go smooth as far as the kind of feedback you get from the teams, you need to please your supervisor, not necessarily the teams. Claiming the coach was happy with your performance is telling the supervisor that his opinion doesn’t mean much. This is dangerous. The supervisor is your boss and is there to back you when the coach turns on you. Work to improve the league standard the supervisor is being asked to uphold, and to make the game fair and safe.

Please note that the above tips are in no way intended to prevent or stop a good conversation or exchange of ideas on the game performance of an official. Open and honest dialogue is essential to improving as an official. However, if an official consistently shows lack of interest in the supervision process, blames others, or always has a handy excuse for why something did or did not happen, this will be an area of concern to the supervisory staff.

I hope these tips are of value to you.

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(For a copy of the Canadian Hockey Association Supervisors Handbook, please contact me at ndueck@canadianhockey.ca)