

"ACCOUNTABILITY IN OFFICIATING"

SURVEY

In April 2003 NASO conducted an Internet survey of its members who are subscribers to *LockerRoom*, NASO's monthly e-newsletter. Approximately 2,500 NASO members were surveyed and 697 had responded at the time when the survey results were compiled. The questions were keyed to the topics that are to be discussed at "Sports Officiating 2003," NASO's annual conference. The intent of the survey was to obtain officials' views concerning the various issues that surface in a discussion of "accountability in officiating." The survey results follow.

1. What sports do you officiate?

- 24% Basketball
- 23% Football
- 19% Baseball
- 16% Softball
- 6% Soccer
- 5% Volleyball
- 2% Swimming
- 1% Track and Field
- 1% Hockey
- 1% Wrestling
- 2% Other(s)

2. What is the primary level of games you work?

- 60% High school varsity
- 15% Small college
- 7% Junior varsity
- 6% Major college
- 6% Youth
- 3% Rec league
- 1% Freshman
- 1% Professional
- 1% Other

3. How long have you been officiating?

- 39% 20 or more years
- 14% 15-19 years
- 23% 10-14 years
- 16% 5-9 years
- 7% 1-4 years
- 1% Less than one year

4. Should officials' associations implement a code of conduct for member officials?

- 91% Yes
- 2% No
- 7% Maybe

5. Does your primary officiating association have a code of conduct for officials in place?

- 57% Yes
- 30% No
- 10% I don't know
- 3% I do not belong to an officiating association

6. If your primary officiating association has a code of conduct in place are there consequences if a member violates the code?

- 16% Always
- 41% Usually
- 26% Sometimes
- 15% Rarely
- 2% Never

NASO has developed a model *Covenant with Sports Officials*. (Go to “educational material” at www.officiatingdevelopmentalliance.org to view.) The *Covenant* lists responsibilities that organizations and individuals that assign, evaluate or require the use of officials have to those officials. It addresses such areas as non-discrimination, security, limiting officials’ liability, and due process for officials. Questions 7-11 relate to covenants.

7. Which of the following best describes your view?

- 43% Officials owe a lot more to the Game than the Game owes to officials.
- 12% Officials owe a little more to the Game than the Game owes to officials.
- 41% Officials owe as much to the Game as the Game owes to officials.
- 2% The Game owes a little more to officials than officials owe to the Game.
- 2% The Game owes a lot more to officials than officials owe to the Game.

8. Should organizations or individuals that assign, evaluate or require the use of officials have some form of a covenant in place?

- 81% Yes
- 3% No
- 16% Maybe

9. Do the primary recipients of your officiating services have some form of a covenant with sports officials?

- 35% No
- 32% Yes
- 33% Don’t know

10. Who should be primarily responsible for implementing some form of covenant with sports officials?

- 37% State or regional governing organizations (e.g., state high school organization)
- 24% Local officiating organizations
- 18% National governing organizations (e.g., NCAA, NFHS)
- 17% Individual leagues or conferences
- 3% National officiating organizations (e.g., NASO)
- 1% Covenants are not necessary

11. Does your state or area have some form of a covenant with officials that applies to you?

- 36% Yes
- 24% No
- 40% Don’t know

12. If you answered “Yes” to question #11, at what level is the covenant applicable?

- 53% State/area
- 34% Local
- 9% National
- 3% Other
- 1% Don’t know

13. If you answered “No” to Question #11, have officials in your state/area tried, but unsuccessfully, to have some form of a covenant implemented?

- 72% Don’t know
- 21% No, we have not tried
- 7% Yes, we’ve tried but were unsuccessful

14. Which is the biggest problem where you officiate?

- 49% Officials aren’t shown enough respect
- 16% Officials aren’t paid enough
- 35% Neither is a particularly significant problem

15. Assume there are limited funds available for use in improving officiating. Where should the money be spent? Rank order the relative importance of using resources on improving the following. (1 is the most important, 5 is the least important)

- 1 - Training programs (average ranking = 1.77)
- 2 - Evaluation programs (2.71)
- 3 - Recruitment/retention programs (2.92)
- 4 - Game fees (3.52)
- 5 - Working conditions at games (3.55)

16. This question addresses the responsibilities the institutions governing officiating have to officials. Please rate each action on a scale of 1 through 5 in terms of importance and priority for action. (1 = high importance and high priority; 5 = low importance and low priority)

- 1 - Supporting officials in controversial situations (average ranking = 1.54)
- 2 - Providing effective officiating training opportunities (1.62)
- 3 - Providing timely information concerning venue/time changes, cancellations, etc. (1.63)
- 4 - Giving performance evaluation feedback to officials (1.79)
- 5 - Establishing safe and private locker rooms for officials (1.95)
- 6 - Providing better game-site management support (1.96)
- 7 - Establishing fair game fee structures (2.03)
- 8 - Ensuring adequate representation for officials in league/conference matters (2.11)
- 9 - Making sure that training and administrative requirements are not excessive (2.41)
- 10 - Making mandatory-meeting sites conveniently located (2.45)
- 11 - Recognizing officials for their achievements (2.46)
- 12 - Getting input from officials' organizations on game assignments (2.65)
- 13 - Establishing affordable and consistent uniform requirements (2.83)
- 14 - Giving officials consistent access to amenities such as towels, beverages, etc. at game sites (2.84)

17. Should officials be subject to formal penalties for errors in officiating judgment?

- 68% No
- 4% Yes
- 28% Maybe

18. Should officials be subject to formal penalties for errors caused by misapplication of a rule?

- 34% Yes
- 28% No
- 38% Maybe

19. If a penalty is imposed on an official for an error in judgment and/or misapplication of the rules, should whatever penalty is imposed on that official be extended to the entire officiating crew?

- 3% Always
- 7% Most of the time
- 47% Sometimes
- 28% Rarely
- 15% Never

20. If a penalty is imposed on an official for an error in judgment and/or misapplication of the rules, who should administer the penalty?

- 52% An officiating organization
- 30% The assigning body or individual
- 15% The conference or league hierarchy
- 1% A fellow sports official
- 2% Other

21. Which statement best reflects your opinion concerning dealing with errors in officiating judgement and/or misapplication of a rule?

- 61% Errors are inevitable, a good evaluation system is sufficient to take care of them.
- 34% Serious errors demand serious consequences, but not all errors are serious.
- 5% Get over it. Everyone makes mistakes.
- <1% Any officiating error should be penalized.

22. In general, do you believe the officiating evaluation programs you are personally involved with do a good job of holding officials accountable for their performance?

- 65% No
- 35% Yes

23. Should officials be expected to adhere to higher standards of ethical and moral conduct than the general public?

- 85% Yes
- 15% No

24. Should officials be required to undergo background checks as a prerequisite to officiating at high school and lower levels?

- 61% Yes
- 39% No

25. Should officials be required to undergo background checks as a prerequisite to officiating at college and higher levels?

66% Yes
34% No

26. Should an official's off-the-field conduct be legitimate grounds for suspension from officiating assignments?

32% Yes
6% No
61% Maybe

27. Suppose you are a candidate for disciplinary action either because of an on-the-field or off-the-field incident. Are procedures in place in your primary officiating environment to assure that you will be allowed "due process?"

40% Yes
25% No
35% Don't know

28. Should officials be authorized to meet with members of the media in postgame sessions to discuss game situations?

61% No
13% Yes
26% Maybe

29. Do you feel officials generally are rewarded appropriately?

58% No
42% Yes

30. Rank order the relative importance of the following methods of rewarding officials. (rank them 1 through 7 with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important)

- 1 - Post-season assignments
(average ranking = 2.23)
- 2 - Better assignments (2.60)
- 3 - More money (3.90)
- 4 - More assignments (3.94)
- 5 - Training opportunities (4.07)
- 6 - Camp/clinic scholarships (4.40)
- 7 - Recognition through awards (4.54)
(e.g., referee of the year)

31. Classify the impact more/better rewards would have on officiating recruitment and retention programs. They would be:

- 31% A big help
- 52% Some help
- 14% A little help
- 3% No help

32. What is your "employment" status as an official?

- 85% I am always an "independent contractor."
- 6% Usually I am an "independent contractor."
- 7% Sometimes I am an "independent contractor;" sometimes I am an "employee."
- 1% Usually I am an "employee."
- <1% I am always an "employee."