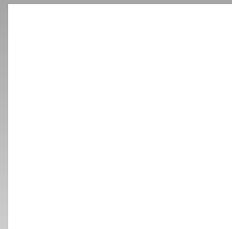
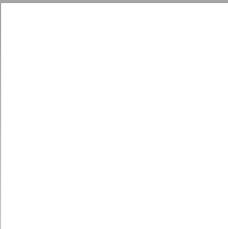


SPECIAL REPORT



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPORTS OFFICIALS

EVALUATING OFFICIATING PERFORMANCE



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EVALUATING OFFICIATING PERFORMANCE



Written By Dave Sabaini

Edited By Jim Arehart, *Referee* associate editor
for The National Association of Sports Officials
Racine, Wis.

NASO Special Report: Sports Officiating 2002 – Evaluating Officiating Performance

Material contained in this *Special Report* was current and applicable at the time of publishing. If you become aware of inaccuracies in the *Special Report*, please contact the author at the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) at 262/632-5448; Fax 262/632-5460; or e-mail bstill@naso.org.

Additional copies of this report are available from the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) for \$10.00 each.

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Published jointly by the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) and Referee Enterprises, Inc. (REI), P.O. Box 161, Franksville, WI 53126.

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Printed in the United States of America

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Friends of Officiating,

Evaluating officials has long been a tough job for both the evaluators and those being evaluated. In June 2002, officiating representatives from 46 states and the District of Columbia, gathered in Albuquerque, N.M., to discuss issues related to evaluating officiating performance and to seek answers to critical problems.

Our goal when we began planning that conference was to create an event that would provide an atmosphere that is intellectually stimulating, fun and enjoyable. Attendees left Albuquerque with a heightened awareness and appreciation of what can be done when people gather to share techniques and brainstorm solutions.

Please share this report with those who can influence change. The challenge of maintaining fair, unbiased and effective evaluations cannot be accomplished by one person or even one group. It is everyone's responsibility to support officiating education. While NASO is taking the lead to make a difference, it's up to you and your fellow officials back home to continue to carry the torch. It matters not what level you work; all of us must pull together to make a meaningful difference. It is clear that the responsibility lies with anyone interested in furthering excellence in officiating.

NASO takes great pride in serving as a catalyst for that endeavor, and in providing a forum for sports leaders to come together and tackle officiating issues face to face and hands on. We hope this report helps you continue to reach for officiating excellence in your organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Mano". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Barry Mano
President, NASO

SPORTS OFFICIATING 2002
EVALUATING OFFICIATING PERFORMANCE

Educational Program

All the sessions at NASO's 20th annual national conference related to the overall conference theme of evaluating officiating performance, with each examining the issue from a different angle.

Structured to have a logical flow, the educational program outlined such evaluation topics as what elements constitute an effective evaluation program, who is most qualified to do the evaluating, how various leagues, states and conferences currently conduct evaluations and what tools are available to help evaluators, as well as many others.

Additionally, bonus sessions were presented showcasing various officiating tools, such as Harvey Ratner's vision training seminar and Reid Evans' Arbiter assigning software.

What follows is a breakdown of each session, in chronological order, including a speaker list and pertinent information of what was discussed.

From Skokie to the Super Bowl

Session One — Speaker: Jerry Markbreit



Starting the conference on an upbeat note, one of the most respected officials of any sport, former NFL referee Jerry Markbreit, discussed what it takes to reach the pinnacle of success and remain there.

Hardly anyone who puts on the stripes doesn't dream — even fleetingly — of climbing from the youth leagues to the pros. Through years of dedication, determination and improvement, they'll reach the pinnacle. The 2002 NASO conference featured speaker, Jerry Markbreit, did just that.

Markbreit started his officiating career in the Chicago suburbs doing youth league games. Before it was all over, he had worked four Super Bowls, and was perhaps the most recognizable referee in American sports. Today, Markbreit is a referee trainer and replay official for the NFL. His talk was called, "From Skokie to the Super Bowl."

Markbreit's talk was laced with humor and anecdotes. He told his attentive audience not to be afraid to retire because "it'll take them 10 years to realize you're not officiating anymore!"

Having had a cameo appearance in a recent popular Hollywood movie, Markbreit admitted that being a referee in the NFL was "kind of a minor celebrity role."

Markbreit called his audience of officials and officiating leaders "risk takers," adding, "most people don't have the guts to do what you do."

Being from the Chicago area, Markbreit said that he usually was not assigned to work Chicago Bears games. That changed, however, in November of 1986 when Jerry was assigned a Bears' game for the first time in 11 years. It just happened to be against the Bears' mortal enemy the Green Bay Packers.

Fans may remember that game as the one where Bears quarterback Jim

McMahon was body slammed after the play by a Packer defender. Of course Markbreit, as the referee, saw what happened and immediately threw his flag. Seconds later, a Bears' player retaliated and was witnessed by a different official who also threw a flag. Offsetting penalties in such a flagrant situation would have spun the game out of control. Markbreit took charge, telling the other official what happened, and asking him to pick up his flag. He did, and a volatile situation was diffused.

“Officiating gives you a fulfillment of life that other things don’t give you. It does not last forever.”

— *Jerry Markbreit*

“You’ve got to be ready every single day, every play,” urged Markbreit.

Markbreit related the incident to his audience. “I don’t have to tell you why we all officiate. We all want to know how good we can be. Give me the toughest game you have.”

Turning the mood lighter again, Markbreit related a story from his first Super Bowl, Super Bowl XVII. Each Super Bowl has its own special coin for the coin toss. The one in use that game had two similar sides with helmets on both the front and the back. The resulting confusion was

not the way Jerry wanted to begin his first Super Bowl, but he insisted, “You have to be able to laugh at yourself. You need humor. You also need to be tough. Fearless. You also need heart.”

As he concluded his comments to an appreciative audience, Markbreit left them with one final thought.

“Officiating gives you a fulfillment of life that other things don’t give you. It does not last forever.”

The Essentials of Evaluating Performance

Session Two — Speaker: Mary Cooley

Officiating evaluation systems were stacked up against classic models of good evaluating systems to find out what the commonalities are and how to avoid pitfalls in evaluations.

When it comes to evaluating performance, especially in the world of officiating where the qualities that define excellence are not universally agreed upon, it could be helpful to “think outside the box.” Session two did just that, utilizing human resource expert Mary Cooley.

Cooley’s assignment was to inform attendees of the principles that shape good evaluation systems. She also encouraged those present to consider some elements they may be able to take with them to the state or local levels.

Cooley admitted from the start that there are no perfect evaluation systems, but that they are a fact of life. She also pointed out that good systems are able to identify “who’s ready to move up.” Effective systems, according to Cooley, should help you highlight “who has the capability, who has been trained and who is ready to take on that next level of responsibility.”

Early on in the session, Cooley dismantled the notion that evaluations, by their very nature, are automatically negative. Although most in attendance admitted they do not look forward to conducting evaluations, the majority admitted they were necessary and in need of improvement.

Cooley supplemented the materials she provided with a list of characteristics that are part of any effective evaluation system.

First, Cooley stated the criteria that you’re using to base your decisions on should be objective and quantifiable. This eliminates factors such as someone’s “attitude.”

Next, according to Cooley, performance standards should be established according to levels in an organization. In an officiating organization, that may mean that we should be careful to evaluate by factors such as experience rather than by test scores. Does your association make a fourth year official

“compete” against a 15-year veteran? If so, Cooley thinks that’s a bad idea.

It’s also important to communicate performance standards. In other words, do your members really know what it takes to advance to the next level, or do you merely assume they do?

The next important element, according to Cooley, is for the evaluators to be trained in how to conduct an evaluation. Are your evaluators delivering mostly negative feedback? If so, the important points may get lost in the negative message.

A good system also allows those being evaluated a chance to respond or even appeal. Even if their response is determined to be without merit, they’ve at least been given the opportunity to give some feedback.

Finally, Cooley says that the best evaluation systems are reviewed regularly. Has your association looked over your evaluation pattern and forms lately? If not, you may discover that there is room for immediate improvement.

Cooley suggests keeping updated records on everyone who is going to be reviewed. “If you have more than a couple people to review, you have to have a system that helps you track the good things they did all year long, the lousy things they did and anything else that occurred,” says Cooley. If you don’t have a system, you will fall prey to one of the most common traps: the recency effect. We can only remember a finite amount

of time, and typically they say that’s six weeks. So when you’re doing a 12-month review and you can only recall the last six weeks of someone’s activity, you’re either going to probably overrate them or underrate them depending on how those six weeks went.”

Cooley also believes “the system should support the mission.” In other words, do the elements to be evaluated really have a bearing on how good of an official someone is, or are they merely ways to get people to do things others don’t want to do?

There are several reasons even good evaluation systems won’t work, according to Cooley. The first is what she called “power and politics.”

Evaluators may find themselves thinking, “I’m not about to give him a

“You have to have a system that helps you track the good things they did all year long, the lousy things that they did and anything else that occurred,”

— *Mary Cooley*

bad review because he got his job because he knows so and so, or she's related to the big boss, and so you allow power issues and political issues to weigh in on the review you give out."

Another problem can be what Cooley calls "first impression."

Our parents told us first impressions count. Unfortunately, the first impression is not always accurate. If we base an evaluation largely on a first impression, we may be doing a good official a great disservice.

Another evaluating problem is a phenomenon Cooley calls "halo or horns." "Halo is they think they walk on water or you think they walk on water so you give them a great review," said Cooley. "Horn is the opposite. Guy screws up everything I give him. Even if he doesn't, you've attached that label to him and he or she can't get past it. They've been marked."

Cooley also identified "contrast effect," in which someone we perceive as being different from us is not given a fair shake. The other side of the coin is that people who we feel are "like us" may be given an unfair advantage.

To avoid those and other pitfalls, Cooley indicated the need for performance-related information and active listening.

Can the corporate world provide officiating organizations with a better model for evaluations? After Cooley's presentation, the consensus seemed to be yes.

Who's Job Is It?

Session Three — Moderator: Gary Whelchel; Panelists: Jeff Hilyer, Jim Hulsman and Ron Adrian

Depending on where you are from, coaches, administrators, assigners, local officials associations and even officials themselves might all weigh in to varying degrees in evaluations. Who is ultimately responsible for making sure officials' evaluations are done right?

There is no question that officials benefit and improve from objective and constructive evaluations. But difficulties exist especially at the lower levels. Who should conduct those evaluations, and what qualifications do we expect our evaluators to have? Will all evaluations follow the same guidelines and use identical criteria?

A panel led by NASO Board Chair and Arizona Interscholastic Association Commissioner of Officials Gary Whelchel, and including former NFOA President Jeff Hilyer, college basketball official Randy Adrian, and Jim Hulsman, the head basketball coach at Albuquerque High School attempted to address those and other issues. Hilyer's assignment was to respond to issues from an official's perspective, while Adrian gave an administrator's perspective and Hulsman spoke from a coach's point of view.

One major underlying problem is that sports officials often don't know who their "boss" is. Is it the local sports chairman, the local association president, the state association, the coaches, or a combination of these? While the panelists certainly represented an excellent cross section of those groups, perhaps the place to start was a definition of evaluations.

For the purpose of the session, an evaluation was defined as "a tool to achieve excellence, a mechanism to support accomplishments, and an avenue to correct deficiencies." Beyond that, an evaluation should provide positive recognition of a job well done.

Discussion seemed to indicate that evaluations, in order to be completely accurate and fair, should be a shared responsibility.

State Associations were cited as the primary groups responsible for evaluations since, as Whelchel noted, "they have the most at stake." While states clearly have much at stake in the choice of tournament officials, there

is great variance around the country when it comes to evaluations and observers. Some states conduct a great number of evaluations by qualified observers, while others do no observations. Consistency is difficult to find.

Local associations were also mentioned as a group with much at stake in

**“Are (coaches)
looking for an edge?
Yes. Do they fight
amongst the officials?
Yes. Do they
blackball? You’re
damn right they do.”**

— *Jim Hulsman*

the world of evaluations, but a primary question here is: Are their evaluations biased, or do they merely perpetuate the “good old boy” network? “One of the ways you can stop all of this from happening,” said Whelchel, “is with policies and procedures.” Whelchel noted that where the “good old boy” network was a problem, the state can step in and set rigid guidelines for local associations.

Certainly one group with much interest in the evaluation of officials, yet the group that stirs the greatest amount of controversy among officials when its influence

is discussed, is the coaches. “Coaches should have an input on who they are hiring and who is going to work the ball game,” noted Coach Hulsman. “(But) the coaches should not have input on how the system should be evaluated. Coaches do not understand all the intricacies that go along with (officiating).”

Yet when it comes to selecting officials for their games and for possible tournament assignments, Hulsman admitted there was bias — and more. “Are (coaches) looking for an edge? Yes. Do they fight amongst the officials? Yes. Do they blackball? You’re damn right they do.”

Still another group with a vested interest in evaluations is league and program administrators. The big questions with this group were do they have a clue what is involved in good officiating, the knowledge to do it, and, therefore, are their evaluations legitimate?

The consensus during the session was that administrators are, perhaps, the least qualified group to evaluate officials. “If, for example, I’m going to evaluate a soccer official,” says official and administrator Adrian, “who am I going to go to? The coach. So I don’t think it’s a good idea (for league administrators to evaluate officials). I think there are some administrators who are qualified, but do they always have a clue what officials do? No.”

Athletic directors were another group cited as having an interest in evaluations. Here there was a wide range of concerns cited. Do they pay attention unless they lose or there is a controversy? Do they merely “rubber stamp” their coaches recommendations? Are they biased toward their own staff who coach and officiate?

“We’ve talked about how (A.D.s) take care of their own and I think they do,” claimed the NFOA’s Hilyer. “We have a system where our coaches rate state tournament officials from their own region, I think they do have a tendency to take care of their own.” Despite concerns expressed by many officials in attendance, it was agreed that athletic directors were a necessary part of the mix.

What about other officials? Are they a good and objective body to conduct evaluations? What are their responsibilities regarding helping younger officials?

Most agreed that while officials were certainly qualified to evaluate other officials, there was too great an opportunity for bias and self-interest with this group.

Commissioners were also considered as a group having an interest in evaluations. The primary questions with this group were: How high is their stake? Do they have the final say? Are they the least biased group?

Session members seemed to agree that commissioners were likely the most objective of all the groups mentioned, and had a relatively high stake in selecting qualified officials. The question was raised, however: How many of their officials do commissioners actually know, and how often have they seen individual officials in action?

The last groups with a vested interest in evaluations are national

associations such as NASO or the NFHS. What exactly should their role be in evaluations? What can they do to facilitate and standardize the process?

“The primary role of the NFHS is to establish the rules of sports play in the high school arena,” said Hilyer. “The assistance that it can give to the local

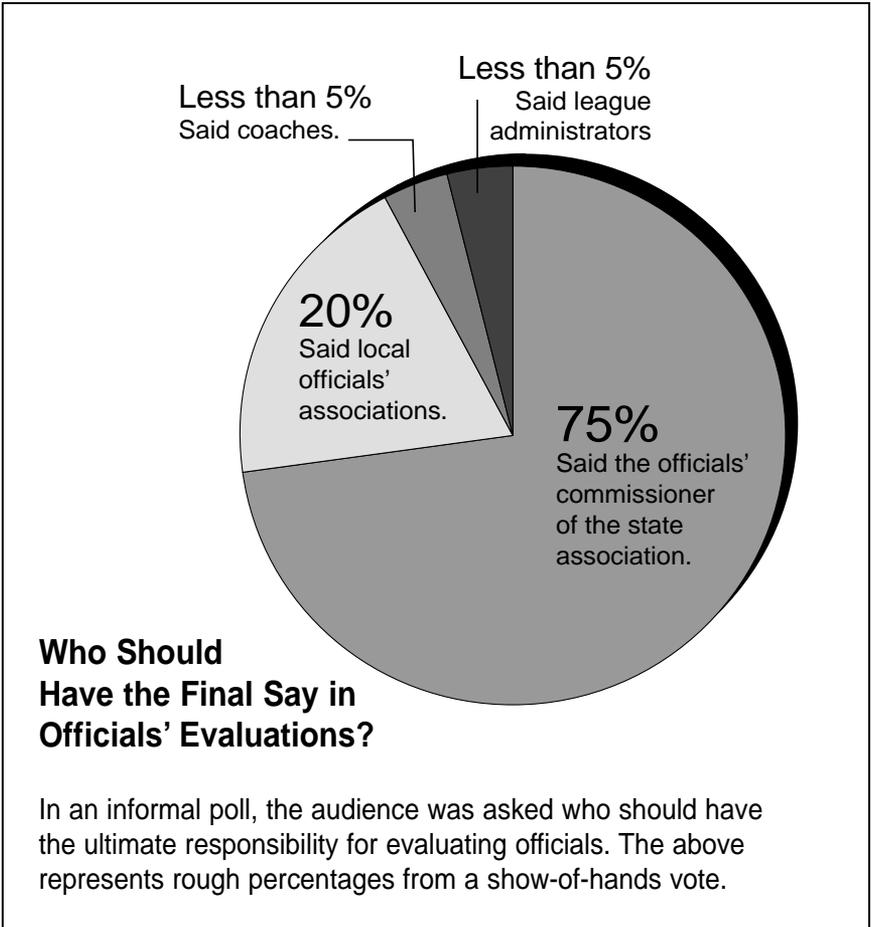
“I don’t think it’s a good idea (for league administrators to evaluate officials). I think there are some administrators who are qualified, but do they always have a clue what officials do? No.”

— *Randy Adrian*

and state associations is training of evaluators, the dissemination of true evaluation forms. But to actually evaluate officials, they don't have that responsibility."

In an informal poll conducted at the end of the session, about 75 percent of those attending said that the commissioner of a state association should have the final say in evaluations and assignments of tournament officials. Local and state associations finished a distant second and third.

Clearly, there were a great number of strong feelings on the issue of "Whose Job Is It?" But the answers were nearly as varied as the number of areas represented.



Defining Officiating Excellence

Session Four — Presenter: Bill Topp

Before any evaluation can take place, you must identify desirable traits. This session asked the big question, “What constitutes excellence in officiating?”

With the topic of the 2002 NASO conference being “Evaluating Officiating Performance,” a key element needed is the creation of a definition of what constitutes officiating excellence. There was a wide range of qualified people in the room who could help construct a meaningful working definition, including leading administrators and officials from around the country.

This key early session was moderated by *Referee* Editor Bill Topp, who started the session by sharing results of a survey, which was sent to 1,000 officials around the U.S..

The survey asked, simply, “What defines officiating excellence?” Attendees used the survey results as a springboard for their own discussion and the development of a working definition.

Topp revealed some of the survey results received from 300 respondents, 51 percent of whom are high school officials, and most of whom have been officiating more than 16 years. Clearly, the majority of respondents were experienced officials.

The three key components for officiating excellence were broken down into the following categories, listed by order of importance according to the survey respondents:

1. KNOWLEDGE – Knowing the rules, officiating mechanics and strategy of the game.

2. APPLICATION – The bringing to bear of many skills to get successful results.

3. COMPORNTMENT – Exhibiting self-conduct that leads to effective performance.

Topp started his session with a discussion of these characteristics, and gained consensus on their importance with conference attendees.

Within the topic of knowledge were several important sub-categories, which survey respondents ranked in the following order of importance:

- 1. Knowing the rules of the game or contest.**
- 2. Knowing the correct officiating mechanics.**
- 3. Having a feel for the game or contest.**
- 4. Understanding the strategy of the game or contest.**

Within the category of application, respondents ranked the following in order of importance:

- 1. Being consistent.**
- 2. Being honest.**
- 3. Displaying sound judgment.**
- 4. Being fair.**
- 5. Being decisive.**
- 6. Displaying good game/contest management skills.**
- 7. Working well with partners/crew members.**
- 8. Displaying good communication skills.**

Within the category of comportment, respondents ranked the following in order of importance:

- 1. Reacting appropriately under pressure.**
- 2. Interacting appropriately with coaches and players.**
- 3. Displaying a positive attitude.**
- 4. Being approachable.**
- 5. Presenting a favorable personal appearance.**

A point was made that many of the characteristics brought up by the survey are difficult or even impossible to measure. For example, how can you measure good communication skills, a feel for the game or reactions under pressure?

Still others in attendance pointed out that evaluators rarely, if ever, even consider some of these important characteristics since they can't be quantified.

Nevertheless, the survey provided some additional direction for those seeking to define officiating excellence. Survey respondents were asked to rank order 17 traits most important to excellence in officiating. The results follow:

Top 17 traits most important to excellence in officiating

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Knowing the rules of the game or contest. | 10. Reacting appropriately under pressure. |
| 2. Being consistent. | 11. Displaying good communication skills. |
| 3. Being honest. | 12. Being decisive. |
| 4. Being fair. | 13. Displaying a positive attitude. |
| 5. Displaying sound judgment. | 14. Presenting a favorable appearance. |
| 6. Knowing correct officiating mechanics. | 15. Understanding the strategy of the game or contest. |
| 7. Displaying good game/contest management skills. | 16. Interacting appropriately with coaches and players. |
| 8. Working well with partners/crew members. | 17. Being approachable. |
| 9. Having a feel for the game or contest. | |

Traits ranked in order of importance

The list supplied by responding officials stirred a great deal of conversation. Did conference attendees agree with the rank order? Did administrators, assigners and evaluators agree with the list as developed by officials? Was any crucial element missing?

With all those questions in mind, Topp focused the group on the task of creating an inclusive, acceptable definition of “officiating excellence.”

Topp’s first goal was to get the group to determine which of the three major characteristics, knowledge, application or comportment was most important, but the audience couldn’t agree on which one was most important.

More productive was Topp’s effort to get the group to compile a list of people who would be considered acceptable and qualified to conduct evaluations. The list included other officials, retired officials, league administrators and even coaches.

With a solid list of desired characteristics, and an accepted list of the people who are qualified to conduct evaluations, Topp focused the group on the task of creating the elusive definition of officiating excellence.

After discussion and input from a wide range of officials and administrators both from high school and higher levels, the group came up with a single definition, but it was still a matter of much contention:

“An excellent official is a person who is knowledgeable in the rules and mechanics of the game and applies them to make the contest fair for all participants and comports him- or herself as a professional at all times.”

According to Topp, the definition is fluid, one that will work at all levels of officiating.

“I think this is the kind of definition that can be amended and applied differently in different situations,” said Topp. “What we are trying to do, though, is make an all-inclusive one that’s a starting point for those types of discussions.”

Topp then encouraged those at the session to take the definition home and put it to work.

“Think about how this is going to apply to your situation, your local association, your state association,” he urged. “What does it mean? Does it change the way you’re doing business? That’s why we’re here. Let’s think about how we’re doing business.”

Every Tool in the Box

Session Five — Speakers: Bob Still and Ralph Nelson

The tools for evaluation are many and differ from level to level. Some are obvious; but some you may have never considered before.

Often, those who are responsible for conducting evaluations rely on the same instruments and methods that have been in use for years. They keep using them because they are comfortable with them.

But are there better ways out there? Are there better techniques and tools that will yield more accurate and thorough evaluations? NASO Communications and Development Manager Bob Still attempted to answer those questions with the help of MLB Vice President of Umpiring Ralph Nelson (see sidebar, “The QuesTec System”).

Still pointed out that, more often than not, the first question officials ask themselves after a game is: What can I do to get better? That is a form of self-evaluation, and it’s a great place to start.

Beyond our own personal review of our performance, Still suggested that we should speak with our partners. Beyond the usual pregame conference and postgame review, discussions about specific plays or mechanics can help us improve our performance for the next game by a notch or two.

Another source of evaluation is a trusted mentor, someone who perhaps helped you break into officiating, or who helped you on the way up. Still suggested that those seeking to improve should also seek mentors. A mentor should be someone you respect, and who will take the time to answer your questions, review your tapes and maybe even go to some of your games.

All of those provide less-traditional methods of evaluation beyond the usual observers, but are there others?

Still suggested that officials could use written exams as tools for improvement. These exams could be open or closed book, and could go far beyond rules and mechanics, dealing with such issues as personality type and decision-making ability.

Many officials use oral quizzes with other officials as a review method. Videotape from games could also be used if available.

Still also suggested that officials not neglect the physical aspects of preparation. How many of us have preseason physical exams that check our hearts, lungs, joints and eyes? Too few.

Do you and your buddies make a point of attending at least one preseason camp or clinic? Are you committed enough to attend a camp or clinic if it isn't required or doesn't count toward your number of required meetings?

As the Internet continues to grow, there are more and more sites with tests, game footage and chat areas for officials. Have you sought out some of these sites in an effort to learn something new?

THE QUESTEC SYSTEM

If we wish to advance as officials, perhaps it would help to look at the tools professional officials use to measure their performance. After all, if those at the top of their profession value regular feedback and evaluation, should we give it a lower priority?

Ralph Nelson of Major League Baseball took the stage to show the audience MLB's advanced and expanding QuesTec Umpire Information System.

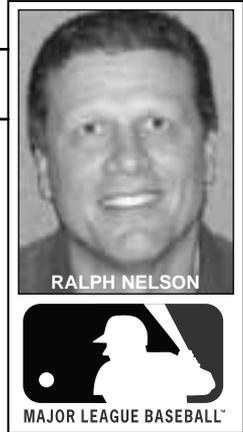
QuesTec was a video tool invented by FOX TV for their broadcasts of Major League Baseball to show where pitches were relative to a batter's strike zone. Before long, MLB adopted the system to use as part of an extensive, pitch-by-pitch evaluation of their umpires, and to help standardize the strike zone.

QuesTec utilizes five cameras, and allows umpires to take a CD-ROM home with them immediately after the game. A copy is also sent to MLB offices. The idea is evaluation for the sake of training. All data is quantifiable. As Nelson said, "You don't evaluate for discipline; you don't evaluate to terminate people. You evaluate to help people get better."

Nelson expounded on the strike zone and some of the difficulties traditionally associated with calling a textbook, "consistent" strike zone.

"The prominent inconsistency was among umpires," Nelson admitted. "We had pitcher's umpires versus batter's umpires, high ball umpires versus low ball umpires. But even more troubling was the existence of the seven unwritten rules that some umpires believed in and followed and other umpires didn't. They included allowing the catcher to influence a call, regardless of the pitch's location as it crossed the plate; the status or reputation of the player; and following the path of least resistance, which was calling pitches not by the rulebook but to avoid arguments." Enter QuesTec.

The FOX TV broadcast system was refined to track the location of a pitch as it crosses home plate with accuracy within four tenths of an inch. Two cameras are placed high in the stadium and they actually plot the location of



the pitches from the time the ball leaves the pitcher's hand until it crosses home plate. Two additional cameras are located at field level to measure the height of the path. A center field camera is used not as any part of the tracking device but to provide a familiar reference to the umpires.

**“You don’t evaluate
for discipline; you
don’t evaluate to
terminate people.
You evaluate to
help people get
better.”**

— *Ralph Nelson*

While five cameras are used as part of this entire system, the cameras and the computer used to triangulate and measure the pitch are those located high above the stadium. As each pitch is recorded, an operator compares the tracking of the pitch to what is called by the umpire and records it on a compact disk. A copy of the disk is given to the umpire after the game and another copy is sent to Major League Baseball.

MLB reviews every QuesTec game pitch by pitch, checking for strike zone accuracy. Umpires and evaluators can review a computer rendering of every pitch requiring a ball/strike call by the

umpire. “Our philosophy is one pitch means nothing,” said Nelson. “If you find yourself starting to get into patterns, however, then that’s something that we’re going to have to adjust either judgment-wise or mechanics-wise.”

Beyond the evaluation of individual umpires, QuesTec allows MLB to chart patterns of ball/strike calls for their umpires as a complete group.

Tools To Evaluate

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-evaluation• Partner• Mentor• Observer• Written Exam | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral Exam• Physical Exam• Camps & Clinics• The Internet• Film & Video |
|---|--|

How to Reward Officials

Session Six — Speaker: Gerry Austin

Once you've identified the best and the brightest, rewarding your most excellent officials is crucial to making sure you retain them. A quality schedule is just one of the many carrots available to recognize improvement.

When one considers the people most qualified to discuss the best ways to reward officials, it seems logical to turn to a person who has advanced successfully through the many levels of officiating.

NFL Referee Gerry Austin is such an official.

Austin has been in the NFL since 1982, and has worked three Super Bowls, but before that success, he officiated at the collegiate, high school and even youth levels. He knows how to advance. But is advancement the only reward available to officials? Austin says no.

One reward officials often overlook, according to Austin, is the fact that they are part of a team. Whether you are a member of a football crew, or working a contest with one other partner, you share a special bond with other officials that is unique to this avocation.

Along with that special bond come some responsibilities, according to Austin.

"I need to have a vision, and the vision has got to be: Where are we going? I want us to be the best crew we can be for that season, but I also want it to be a crew that enjoys each other's company, enjoys being together."

Austin also believes that camaraderie can help with advancement, another form of reward. "You know what you want to be, but be honest with yourself as to what you are," he said. "If you know what you are and you know what you want to be, then you can start taking the steps to get there. And you can't go from here to there immediately. It goes by steps. So be honest with your own self-assessment."

Austin believes officials at all levels must be coachable, or open to suggestions for improvement. Those who aren't often find their careers cut short.

Attitude is another important factor cited by Austin. Related to that is the issue of character.

"Talent is a gift you have, but character is a choice you make. A person makes a choice about their character. You make a choice about the level of your integrity, and your action determines your integrity. The way you live

and the way you do things make that determination.”

But what can administrators or evaluators do to increase the reward factor to their officials? Plenty, says Austin who is also supervisor of football officials for Conference USA.

“One is to give you the feedback that gives you an opportunity to grow as an individual and have a strong sense of self-worth and self-esteem. I have a responsibility to the Conference USA staff to enable (officials) to grow, then understand the growth, and to have a sense of self-worth and self-being, that their self-esteem is high. That’s a reward.”

Austin related several anecdotes from his storied career, summarizing with his next point: that officials are unique people, and that’s something of which they can be proud.

“Talent is a gift you have, but character is a choice you make. A person makes a choice about their character. You make a choice about the level of your integrity, and your action determines your integrity. The way you live and the way you do things makes that determination.”

— *Gerry Austin*

“We have that opportunity to be a member of an elite group. We can take pride individually in what was accomplished, and we can take pride individually in what is accomplished by our group. We should always be proud of what we’re doing,” he noted.

Austin wound up his inspirational and often humorous session with his philosophy of rewards.

“You’ve got to build an organization, and the organization has to have a sense of purpose,” urged Austin. “You have to know what your vision is and where you’re going. You have to know where you can build the trust and the development, and you want to build a foxhole buddy. That’s what you’re looking for, because the rewards are being a part of an elite group, having pride in what you do. Have a strong

sense of self-worth because you participate in something you love that is your passion, that is part of your heart. Because if there’s one thing I could say right now, it’s let’s start the season tomorrow because I’m ready to play some football!”

How States Select Their Tournament Officials

Session Seven — Presenter: Jim Arehart

An NASO survey queried state associations to discover how they select the most deserving officials to work their state tournaments. Responses revealed much about the variety of evaluations being used.

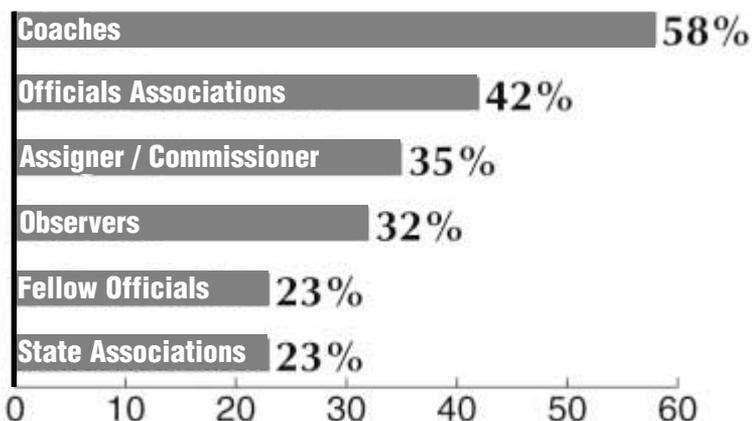
One of the most common conversations when officials get together from different areas is how tournament officials are selected. It was no different at the 20th NASO conference, but this time, it was the topic of a detailed survey and a formal session.

Referee Associate Editor Jim Arehart led a session that centered around an ambitious survey that NASO sent to 50 state associations plus 10 California associations. There were 40 responses.

The first result relayed by Arehart was, perhaps, the most surprising: 52 percent of responding associations revealed they do not use a standardized system for awarding tournament assignments. Is that a major flaw, or does it allow states a requisite amount of “wiggle room”?

When the topic turned to who does the rating, the audience knew what the respondents would say:

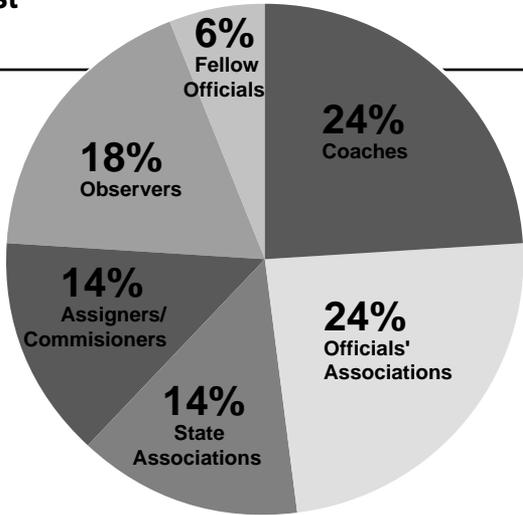
Who rates officials in your state?



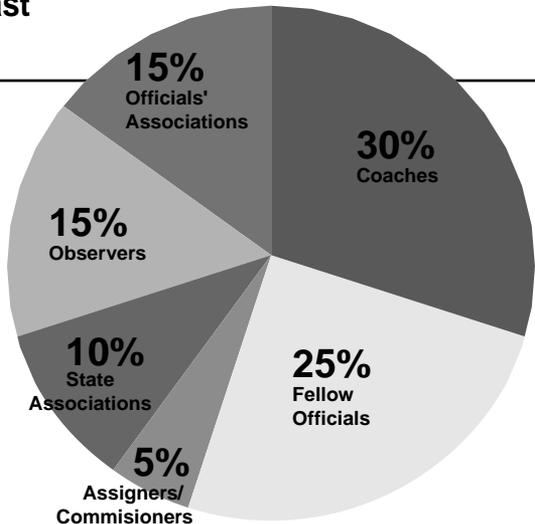
Many states rely on multiple evaluations for postseason assignments, thus accounting for a total over 100 percent.

Of all the input received when considering postseason official scheduling, which opinions carry the most weight? It was a tie between coaches' votes and the officials' associations. Of least impact were the votes of fellow officials. The question begged to be asked: Is that as it should be?

Who is given the most weight in ratings?



Who is given the least weight in ratings?



When surveyors asked state associations if they were satisfied with the system they had in place, it was of little surprise that 73 percent said yes. Would the officials who were evaluated by those systems give the same response?

When state associations were asked, despite their satisfaction, what they considered to be the most significant weakness of their current system, the leading response was: the lack of a standardized evaluation system, which was cited by fully half of the respondents, followed by inadequate feedback from officials at 38 percent.

What was the strength of the system currently in use? Acceptability to major parties involved was cited by half of the respondents. It is clear, if officials are not satisfied with the system in use by their state, they need to make that dissatisfaction known to the powers that be. Another strength as far as the states are concerned is that 45 percent believe their systems are easy to administer and understand.

Apparently ease of administration is a key factor, because only 17 percent of states have any budget for observing officials, yet 40 percent of states utilize observers for their officials.

Arehart then opened the session for comments, and there were many.

Florida, which recently enacted a fee charged to officials who wish to be observed, came under some discussion. The audience felt, in general, that was not a good idea. The question was asked: How can you ask officials to pay for their own evaluations?

Several attendees shared how tournament assignments are made in their state, and one point became clear rather quickly: There is no uniformity. Is that a bad thing or a good thing?

Most audience members seemed to feel that, despite some obvious flaws, most systems were generally able to select most of the qualified officials.

Nevertheless, several people indicated that there were changes in progress in several states. The conclusion from this lively and interesting session? States select their tournament officials in a wide variety of systems, but many are looking for ways to improve.

It is clear, if officials are not satisfied with the system in use by their state, they need to make that dissatisfaction known to the powers that be.

This Is How We Do It

Session Eight — Moderator: Jack Roberts; Panelists: Julie Ilacqua, Dan Salzwedel and Gary Whelchel

Different states, different leagues, different associations — they all evaluate officials their own way. Here, a cross-section of officiating administrators reveals how they do it and discuss the differences.

When it comes to evaluations, states often feel “the devil you know is better than the devil you don’t know.” In other words, it is difficult to get leaders to consider changes to a system they’ve developed over the course of several years and are comfortable with even if they are aware of problems within that system.

This session sought to highlight four different evaluation systems, three from various state high school associations and another from U.S. Soccer (USSF) to assist attendees in beginning the process of taking a closer look at their own systems.



“(Our system) gives evaluators the opportunity to see ongoing problems as they come up.”

— Julie Ilacqua

The U.S. Soccer System — As the only non-scholastic organization represented in the session, Julie Ilacqua from the USSF told about the comprehensive system in place in that organization in which they utilize trained assessors. Ilacqua pointed out that referees must be assessed to move up within the organization. If a referee fails an assessment, they must pass twice as many assessments to move up. Soccer’s assessors are in the stadiums and

conduct their evaluations on-site. Following a contest, assessors may well go into the locker room and discuss certain calls with the referees. Afterward, it is not unusual for evaluators to go over video of the games as well.

In addition to these assessors, the USSF has created what it calls “coach-mentors” who collect input from any USSF staff members who have watched a game and have input on the performance of officials along with any

feedback from the director of officials.

That entire package is compiled as the assessment for the referees after every game and made available online. According to Ilacqua, "As a former referee, I look at it and I say 'Wow.' If I had received this kind of input when I was an official, this would just be terrific. It helps in growth. (Our system) gives evaluators the opportunity to see ongoing problems as they come up and say, 'He's having this problem here,' and then it gives us an opportunity if we want to send one of our coach-mentors to a particular game to work with a referee before a game, after a game, to help give them that more one-on-one support."



"Our role principally is not to filter people out. We want to bring people up to a higher level."

— *Dan Salzwedel*

The New Mexico System — Dan Salzwedel, the New Mexico Activities Association executive director and NFHS board member, admitted that, though effective, the New Mexico evaluation program that has been in effect for over 18 years "has flaws, like all systems do." One difference in the New Mexico system is that the state association assigns officials not merely for postseason games, but all games in the regular season as well. Therefore their evaluation system is "integrated into that from the very beginning."

Officials are rated from one to four, a four being the equivalent of certified level in many other states. Salzwedel distributed copies of New Mexico's comprehensive official's evaluations that asks evaluators to rate officials on such wide ranging responsibilities as promptness, fitness, pregame conferences, rules knowledge, ethics, signals, maturity, consistency, communication and comportment.

According to Salzwedel, "Our role principally is not to filter people out. We want to bring people up to a higher level, and knowing that some people are not going to have the talent to always get to the level that they probably would like to get to at some point in time."

New Mexico evaluators are trained at clinics by members of the state staff. But Salzwedel admitted there were still concerns. "Where is the hole in the process? Obviously, if we train several different people, even though we tell you how to interpret it, there's still going to be some discrepancy in how it's

applied out in the field. We catch up with that absence of reliability at times, and we're all going to get tested with this to one extent or another."

Checks and balances are in place. Officials are not evaluated by the same person more than once in any three-year evaluation period, but will be evaluated at least three times. The evaluators are never seen by or made known to the officials. Officials don't know at which games they'll be evaluated.

So who does the evaluating? "It is generally officials, or people who have an understanding of performance-based areas, not professional stuff, or communication stuff, necessarily, but performance in that particular sport," said Salzwedel.

Coaches are also brought into the New Mexico mix, as they are able to vote or rate officials. Therefore, Salzwedel says coaches have some input but "it's a part of the process, it's not the whole process."

There are also pre- and post-evaluation conferences with officials in this thorough system. In fact, officials can even request an extra evaluation or two if they feel their rating was not representative of their performance.



"You can have the greatest instrument ... But if a healthy instrument is used by unhealthy people in an unhealthy organization, you're going to get unhealthy results."

— Gary Whelchel

The Arizona System — The final panelist of the session was Gary Whelchel, Arizona Interscholastic Association commissioner of officials and outgoing NASO board chair. In previous sessions, there had been much discussion over the weight coaches' votes should have upon an official's postseason assignments. The topic was not lost on Whelchel who addressed that issue first. He noted he doesn't like to use the word "influence" when it comes to a coach's input.

"I like to use the word validate. In Arizona we validate the coaches' votes. We send out to all 218 member schools a list of officials who are eligible to work the state tournament in their area. They then have a deadline date to turn that

back in, and we get about 150 to 170 of those back. Then I come up with a number through a percentage calculation, a cutoff number. If an official has

this many votes, they're going to work the state tournament. It doesn't make any difference what information I get from local associations, from our sports boards. The officials that have that particular number of votes will work the state tournament."

Long a leader in NASO, Whelchel spoke frankly about what he had been hearing at the conference thus far.

"One of the things I'm picking up as I've spent the last day and a half listening to everybody talk is that we're dealing with a lot of unhealthy organizations. You can have the greatest instrument, and New Mexico has a great instrument. But if a healthy instrument is used by unhealthy people in an unhealthy organization, you're going to get unhealthy results. If you have a 'good old boy network', that's an unhealthy situation. If you have people with self-made agendas, that's an unhealthy situation. The only way you're going to correct the unhealthy situation is to make it healthy. You do that by prescription, or by policy changing, or by procedure changing."

Whelchel proceeded to outline Arizona policy that NFHS rules and mechanics be followed to the letter. "We put the onus on the official. It's their job."

Whelchel said that Arizona looks at the process of evaluations playing a role in three areas: self-improvement, advancement to the next level, and selection for the state tournament and regional playoffs.

Arizona makes postseason assignments based partially on geography, too. "We divide our state tournaments up by percentage," Whelchel noted. "It's based on the number of officials in an area. Let's say that the Yuma area, for example, has 10 percent of the officials in the state that work basketball. They're going to get allotted to them 10 percent of the games in the state tournament. I allow (local associations) the complete freedom to select those officials until we get to the semifinals and finals."

Give and Take

Session Nine — Moderator: Mary Struckhoff; Panelists: Marcy Weston, Mike Pereira, Ralph Nelson and Marc Ratner

While it's often difficult to be on the receiving end of an evaluation and listen to criticism, it's also very difficult to be an evaluator and have to offer honest appraisals of officials' work time and again.

Most officials agree they want to be evaluated, but are not evaluated nearly often enough. Yet when evaluations come their way, they sometimes become oversensitive to the criticism that is presented to them.

On the other hand, evaluators often know what to look for, and how to recognize good or bad performances when they see them, but have difficulty interpersonally when delivering the evaluation. This session focused on ways to improve both giving and receiving evaluations.

Mike Pereira, NFL director of officiating, was the first to address the group. He indicated that the NFL evaluates every play of every game. NFL officials, therefore, are fully aware they are under a microscope, so to speak, as far as their performance is concerned.

"We compile a complete report, and what we do is we send it after conversation with the referee," Pereira revealed. "We do feel the referee is the leader of his crew, and we feel he needs to take responsibility for sharing the game evaluation with each and every member of his crew. We have begun to take it a step further now as we have expanded our supervisory staff. We have six full-time supervisors. Each of these guys has responsibility for each area of their game."

Pereira noted that when a downgrade is given to an official, an attempt is made to soften the blow, but the primary goal is to advise the official he made a mistake. "It's imperative you're honest, you're straightforward, you tell him not only he's wrong but equally important you tell him why he's wrong, so that a negative experience has to be a learning experience. If it's negative without any learning aspect to it, it's worthless."

Marc Ratner, the executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission and commissioner of high school officials for the southern section of Nevada, brought the discussion back to the high school level.

"When we have a questionable call or a problem, I like to meet with the official either in my office or at a place that's agreeable and talk to him face-



Mike Pereira



Ralph Nelson



Marc Ratner



Marcy Weston

to-face,” stated Ratner. “(You) have to have a philosophy of what you want called, and we try to impart that philosophy to the officials. I want to know what the official thought he saw or what he saw, and we go over it. I try to make it as positive as I can, to learn from it, to go forward. Not to say you’re a terrible official, but if the same play happens again, I want you to consider what you did wrong this time and use our philosophy and do better.”

Marcy Weston, who has responsibility for collegiate level officials as the NCAA national coordinator of women’s basketball officiating, told the audience how her task is different. Weston deals with conferences instead of individuals.

“Each respective conference coordinator is ultimately responsible for their staff,” noted Weston. “(The NCAA does) training programs. We give them ideas. We try to provide information, but the specifics of evaluations vary conference to conference.

“All coordinators except for three leagues are temporary staff,” Weston continued. “They’re not full-time office staff. So a lot of things you hear really are dependent upon what you have available at your level, whatever that level might be. Almost everybody has an observer program.”

Ralph Nelson, MLB vice president of umpiring, was next. Earlier in the

“I try to make it as positive as I can, to learn from it, to go forward. Not to say you’re a terrible official, but if the same play happens again, I want you to consider what you did wrong this time and use our philosophy and do better.”

— Marc Ratner

conference, Nelson described the advanced method MLB has for evaluating umpires' performance in certain cities. At this session, Nelson spoke more directly about how evaluations are handled.

"We have two sets of evaluators in our game," said Nelson. "We have a set of what we call independent evaluators, and we were very careful in selecting the 12 of them from across the country. They all had some kind of baseball experience, many of them as players, and some type of officiating experience. They have absolutely no contact with the umpires. They don't go in before, they don't go in after, they're not supposed to talk to them. If they happen to run into them on the street, they cannot talk about the evaluation."

"We have a second set of evaluators and those are our (six) supervisors. They fill out the exact same forms as the independents, but they have

"In order to have an effective evaluation or an effective discussion with an official, you as the evaluator have to be honest. You have to be totally honest. It is not easy."

— *Mike Pereira*

personal contact with the umpires. And so we get kind of a cross-section. The other thing is we don't look for one missed call or one missed play. We like to look for trends, because we feel that when you get to the major leagues as an umpire, you should be able to call balls, strikes, safes, outs, fair, foul. But what will happen is you'll start to see umpires that see a particular kind of play, and it may be because of positioning, it may be because of timing. There may be other factors involved."

Nelson said that the other aspects of umpiring like hustle, demeanor and the like are reviewed on videotape and are handled by crew chiefs.

But what about those evaluations given to officials working the high school and lower levels, where the pay is a fraction of what college and professional officials make? Should those evaluations be handled differently?

"I think for one thing respect is an issue," insisted Pereira. "When you are an evaluator you have to have the respect of the person who you're evaluating. It's a two-way street. In order to have an effective evaluation or an effective discussion with an official, you as the evaluator have to be honest. You have to be totally honest. It is not easy. It's not easy to tell

somebody who is a friend or, in some cases a peer, that he's wrong. So you have to be honest. Then, the person who is being evaluated has to be open. For a good evaluation or a good recommendation to an official, whether it involves positives or negatives, the person you're evaluating has to be open and receptive to constructive criticism."

Weston pointed out other areas of difficulty in evaluating part-time officials. "Most people who work at the recreation, high school or small college level, they want immediate feedback because they've got about 18 other things in their next 24 hours they're going to do, and you need the feedback so you can correct it immediately. When I started doing this, we'd send out (evaluations) every two months. But you could have done 27 games in two months, and you've done the same thing wrong the next 27 times because nobody said anything to you. Our communication systems now make things easier because you actually can get information out, whether you leave a voice message, e-mail or fax something. But if you have the opportunity to do it live, I always think that's the best way."

All of the panelists agreed that evaluations of veteran and rookie officials have to be handled differently. With newer officials, evaluations should concentrate on "big picture" issues, while experienced officials should be evaluated on more specific skills. Every panelist, however, echoed the sentiment that the ideal situation is for experienced officials to help newer officials through formal or informal mentoring, especially in game situations.

Helping each other as officials and as assigners and evaluators — that is the key to relieving some of the pressure of giving and receiving evaluations.

Help Your Evaluators Be More Effective

*Session Ten — Moderator: Bryan Lewis; Panelists: Henry Zaborniak,
Joan Powell, Jerry Seeman and Pat Smith*

Evaluations are only helpful if the people doing the evaluations are properly trained and prepared. This session offered tips on keeping evaluators and observers at the top of their game.

Experience and training are not the only characteristics evaluators need to be packing to be the best they can be. This session focused an experienced and qualified panel on the topic of improving evaluators.

Former NHL Director of Officials Bryan Lewis kicked off the session by asking panelists what type of person makes a good evaluator.

Jerry Seeman, an NFL officiating consultant and former NFL director of officiating, responded first, saying that the ideal evaluator is a professional person who understands what the responsibilities are, who is a “people person,” and knows how to handle them, and most importantly, a person dedicated to his task who is well prepared.

Henry Zaborniak, who in his role as Ohio High School Athletic Association assistant commissioner is involved in evaluating officials went a step farther.

“One of the things we have to look for in an evaluator is a passion for officiating, those people who love officiating and love to help in any way they can,” said Zaborniak. “They need a positive and helpful demeanor. They need a knowledge of the rules and mechanics, and beyond that they need to understand the current philosophies and what’s acceptable today with those rules and mechanics, and finally, they need an ability to communicate in an honest and accurate manner to those individuals who they are observing and evaluating.”

Pat Smith, USSF National Assessor and Instructor, was then given the floor.

“If there’s a downside to evaluating officials, it is that we’re all human and open to mistakes,” Smith noted. “We’re also open to emotion, and those are two traits we must get rid of when we’re evaluating. We have to be cold and objective. We have to be proficient in our ability to look at people and

see them in what our expectations are and if our expectations are met.”

The USSF attempts to accomplish that through a multi-faceted process that involves an evaluator at every game. The evaluator, however, does not address good or bad points with the official either before or after the game. Instead, the evaluator will merely speak to the official to obtain clarification on certain situations that arise.

Simultaneous with the evaluator filing his report on the Internet, the official files his self-evaluation. In controversial situations, the league office will also file a report. At that point, Smith will review a game tape and file his own comments. Officials are then ranked in one of four categories: outstanding, excellent, acceptable and not acceptable. The final step in the process is a conference call between all parties involved.

Joan Powell, president of the Professional Association of Volleyball Officials, noted that her organization deals with four different rule codes on various levels. Nevertheless, the systems used for evaluating officials are remarkably similar.

On some levels, officials must ask to be evaluated to achieve certain rankings. There are evaluating teams assigned to certain sites around the country, and officials, in essence, go to the evaluators.

As a training tool, Powell utilizes a mentoring program in which experienced evaluators take trainees under their wings. Those trainees are involved in every step of the evaluation process. Another part of the training involves role playing and problem solving, essential to new evaluators.

As someone who deals with officials in 14 different sports and who officiates college football, Zaborniak has a unique perspective on evaluators and evaluations.

“As a state association or as an organization we have to communicate with our officials and evaluators exactly what we’re expecting in order for the evaluators to be effective,” Zaborniak said.

Zaborniak came up with eight questions that officials and evaluators must ask or review for the evaluator to be effective:

**“As a state association
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— *Henry Zaborniak*

8 Questions for Evaluators

1. Who will be evaluated? Just those applying for state tournaments, or others?
2. For what purpose will the evaluation be used? Promotion? Improvement? Tournament assignment?
3. Are you looking for wide-ranging improvement? Will data gathered be assembled, analyzed, and utilized to change things in need of improvement?
4. What specifically will be evaluated? Mechanics? Rules knowledge? Physical condition? Attitude?
5. How will you measure improvement?
6. Who will be the evaluator? (“That evaluator needs to be a respected individual, whether it’s a retired official, an active official, a retired or knowledgeable coach trained to evaluate officiating. They have to be respected in their community,” Zaborniak noted.)
7. To whom will the evaluation be provided? Among the logical recipients are the officials themselves, the state association, perhaps the local association or assigner.
8. How often will officials be evaluated? Ideally, Zaborniak said, several times a year.

Seeman’s task was to shed more light on the evaluation process from the professional perspective. “When I accepted the position as the director of officiating in the NFL, I wanted to make sure we had a master training program in which we can have officials work and train and improve,” Seeman recalled. “The evaluation is part of it. We tried to give them feedback as quickly as we could.” Seeman also stressed the importance of continuous self-evaluation.

After explaining the NFL’s extensive weekly review of officials, Seeman brought his point home to those from the lower levels of officiating. “We don’t do it to embarrass anybody. We try to make everybody better, and that’s what I would ask all of you. Take what you’re dealing with and work to improve. Set up a master training program at your level, whether it be mentors or (others), and do the best you can do.”

Blueprint for a Model Evaluation Program

Session Eleven — Moderator: Jeffery Stern; Presenters: Randy Christal, Ron Foxcroft, Gary Gullett, Joan Powell, Jim Arehart, Jerry Grunski, Jerry Seeman and Mary Struckhoff

Drawing on the previous sessions for inspiration, this session discussed some “nuts and bolts” solutions for evaluating challenges.

As the 2002 NASO conference neared its end, an ambitious task was placed before those in attendance. The scores of officiating leaders from around the country were asked to take what they had heard the past two days, participate in one of several breakout sessions and come up with a “blueprint” for an effective evaluation system.

This session was the opportunity for everyone to have some input, and everyone did. *Referee* Associate Editor Jeff Stern led the way, placing every member of the audience into one of eight groups. Each group was headed by a leader in the officiating world, and was to brainstorm for answers to their specific group question. After ample discussion time, each group leader presented the thoughts of their group.

1. Given practical and financial limitations, what technological tools should be used to evaluate amateur officials?

Led by Randy Christal, NASO board member, group members obviously had encountered problems in this area, as they came up with creative and inexpensive ideas. Their suggestions included obtaining video of contests from the schools (which are often willing to copy game tapes if officials provide a blank tape, mailer and postage), video from local cable or television outlets which may have covered the game, or having a spouse tape the game for you. The Internet was also posited as a potential tool for local associations. Perhaps evaluation forms could be made available online as many professional and some collegiate conferences do already. In addition to online forms, e-mail was suggested as a potentially effective method of feedback between interested parties.

Other possible sources of evaluation mentioned by the group were coaches’ cards and friends who watched the game.

2. Survey results indicate that knowledge is the most important element of officiating excellence, followed by application and comportment. How should evaluations be weighted in terms of those attributes?

With such a sweeping question, this group, led by NASO board member Ron Foxcroft, had a tough assignment. The group felt that game control was the top element to be considered. They suggested that officials should have fun and recognize the level of the contest they're officiating. Not every game is officiated the same way.

Common sense came in a close second with the group, which they felt related to a number of points they developed. Game management skills were viewed as the next most important element. Often called "comportment" during the 2002 conference, it was viewed as an often-overlooked element in evaluations.

The group felt that rules knowledge, or a lack thereof, is not always apparent unless there is a "glaring absence" of it. Therefore, it may be difficult to evaluate based strictly on this element. Communication skills were discussed at some length during the conference, and group two thought they were an important, if difficult to measure, consideration. Also cited as important but difficult or impossible to measure were presence, appearance, poise and control. Consistency, that trait often used as a club against officials ("Hey, Blue, how about calling that pitch both ways?"), was the final element of excellence cited by the group.

3. How should evaluations be weighted in terms of the persons doing the evaluating?

Survey results from earlier sessions indicated that active or retired officials are best suited to serve as evaluators and that coaches should have a far lesser role. The response generated by this group, led by NASO board member Gary Gullett, included an analysis of the qualifications of each group, along with some of their negative aspects.

Active officials, the group noted, are very current with respect to mechanics and rules, but often could be friends. Should the credibility of some of these evaluations be questioned? Retired officials may offer a better option.

Most of the group felt that coaches deserved some sort of voice in the evaluation process, but how much of a voice? In an effort to increase objectivity, it was suggested that a delay of at least a few days be built into the system. The group also felt that the level of competition should be a factor in how evaluations are weighted.

Since the group was asked to come up with a number, they arrived at the following “ideal” formula. Active officials’ evaluations should be 40 percent of the equation, retired officials’ evaluations should be worth another 40 percent and coaches’ votes would account for the final 20 percent.

4. How should components of an evaluation form for a non-official (e.g. coach or A.D.) differ from that filed by an experienced official acting as an observer?

The group, led by NASO board member Joan Powell, examined the qualities of knowledge, application and comportment.

Powell noted that the group felt that different forms would be appropriate since, in their opinion, mechanics knowledge, for example, is not something you’d want a coach evaluating.

The group spent some time analyzing the sub-elements of application such as consistency, honesty, judgment, fairness and game management. They felt both groups could evaluate officials on those elements.

The concept of comportment took the most time for the group, however. “Things like reaction under pressure, communication with coaches and players, attitude, approachability, appearance, and also things like being on time,” Powell expressed for the group. “Once you walk into the gymnasium or onto the field, you can be judged immediately and those things should be judged by non-officials and we don’t have a problem with that.”

5. If budgets don’t allow paying evaluators, how can those persons be compensated?

Creative thinking by the group, led by *Referee* associate editor Jim Arehart, produced ideas such as: local associations “passing the hat” to pay for evaluators, deductions from game fees (e.g. \$3 per game), free passes to games for current officials who are conducting evaluations, gifts or recognition for volunteer evaluators, special consideration for better game assignments, and exemptions from required meetings. Stern added the ideas of discounting fees for evaluators. The idea is to get more evaluators working.

6. How can favoritism be eliminated or minimized in the evaluation process?

The term “good old boy” network surfaced again with this group, led by *Referee* columnist Jerry Grunski. If evaluators are playing favorites, the group needs to have a system by which they can be voted out.

It is also important to have good evaluation tools. That is something the state can help with. Also in the purview of the state association is urging local associations to promote change when it comes to both recommending officials for tournament assignments and the elimination of any self-selecting processes.

Grunska next addressed the issue of coaches playing favorites with officials. "A system should be changed that relies on coaches' year-to-year status quo operation," he stated. "What we're speaking of here is that if coaches are the ones who determine which officials are going to be (chosen), and yet they simply rubber stamp the same people year after year after year, then there should be a way to change the system of coaches making the selection of officials."

7. How can state or local associations ensure that observers are uniformly and properly trained?

The group, led by NASO board member Jerry Seeman, decided that certification programs must be developed statewide and conducted annually for evaluators. Beyond that, the programs should contain an onfield element, recommendations from officials associations, attendance at rules meetings and emphasis on a mentor program.

The group also suggested that such training programs be supported both financially and administratively by the state associations.

8. How can individual officials or local associations persuade leaders to implement the model evaluation system?

After much discussion regarding state differences and reluctance to change, NFHS Assistant Director Mary Struckhoff summarized the feelings of the group. Proponents for change must "show that it will promote consistency and retention, more competent officials more credibility, more accountability," she said. "If it promotes fairness to all officials," most state associations would be more open to it. States may also be more open to new programs that could be phased in by sport, for example or over time.

The session ended with everyone having a handful of ideas to take back and use to put together a better evaluation program.

Make Things Better

Session Twelve —Speakers: Barry Mano and Bernie Saggau

After starting the conference sessions on a high note, the conference concluded with a rousing speech to affirm a commitment to officiating excellence.

During a break before the last session began, two attendees were overheard talking about what they had gained from the 2002 NASO conference. One of them said, “you know, I look around and see these guys from the NFL, the NBA and all over. It makes me think if this stuff matters to them, it ought to matter to us.”

Those words really summed up the general feeling of the officiating leaders in attendance. If evaluation is important to the pros, should it be any less of an issue at the high school, college or youth levels? The unanimous answer was a resounding no.

In the conference’s wrap-up session, NASO Founder Barry Mano teamed with Bernie Saggau, Iowa High School Athletic Association Executive Director, and former NASO Gold Whistle Award winner to summarize Sports Officiating 2002.

Mano pointed with pride to the growing relationship between NASO and the NFHS, a fruit of which was the 2002 conference. Leaders from 15 state associations attended the 2002 conference, a record that may well be broken as the cooperation continues.

Saggau suggested that true evaluations will help retain officials; a comment that tied this year’s conference theme with last year’s. “If people help new officials get better and tell them what they’re doing right, they’ll stay.”

Mano agreed, adding, “Evaluation is about making people better. We want to be around people like that. You’ve got to have somebody teaching you skills. Don’t ever say anyone is a naturally good official.”

After showing a video presentation that summarized the conference, Mano sent the crowd on its way with one final thought.

“There is no such thing as status quo. We are destined to either wilt or grow.”

Successful Officiating 2002 Speaker List

Randy Adrian — Active collegiate basketball official; former Amateur Athletic Union National Supervisor of Women's Basketball Officials; National Interscholastic Athletic Administration Association Credentials Committee Vice Chair.

Jim Arehart — Associate editor of *Referee*, responsible for feature stories; active football official.

Gerry Austin — Current NFL official since 1982; Conference USA Supervisor of Football Officials; has worked three Super Bowls and numerous postseason assignments; former Atlantic Coast Conference basketball official.

Randy Christal — 1996 Rose Bowl and 1997 Sugar Bowl football referee; worked eight NCAA Division I baseball College World Series and the 1984 summer Olympics; NASO Board member.

John Clougherty — Major college men's basketball official; officiated 10 Final Fours including four NCAA championship games; NASO Board Vice Chair.

Mary Cooley — Principal Consultant for HR Solutions, LLC, a human resource assistance group designed to support profit and non-profit organizations; former Human Resources Director for the Hyatt Regency Albuquerque.

Reid Evans — President of Advanced Business Technology; developer of The Arbitrator, software for assigning officials and scheduling games; NASO Education Partner.

Ron Foxcroft — Founder, President and CEO of Fox 40 International; retired NCAA Division I and international men's basketball official; NASO Foundation Trustee; NASO Board treasurer, NASO Education Partner.

Jerry Grunski — Football official for more than 40 years and *Referee* magazine columnist since 1986.

Gary Gullett — IAABO Rules Exam Committee member; Rock Valley College (Ill.) basketball officiating instructor; high school and college basketball referee; NASO Board secretary and Officiating Development Alliance member (ODA).

Jeffery A. Hilyer — Big East Football Officials Association President; former Alabama High School Athletic Association and NFOA President; major college football official; worked six ASA national softball tournaments.

Jim Hulsmann — Albuquerque High School head basketball coach; New Mexico High School Coaches Association member.

Bryan Lewis — Former NHL Director of Officials and Consultant to Hockey Operations; retired NHL referee.

Barry Mano — Founder and President of NASO; Founder and President of Referee Enterprises, Inc., and Publisher of *Referee* magazine; NASO Foundation Trustee; former major college basketball official; Officiating Development Alliance (ODA) member.

Jerry Markbreit — NFL referees' trainer; former NFL referee; worked four Super Bowls; author of three books: *Born to Referee*, *Last Call – Memoirs of an NFL Referee* and *The Armchair Referee – 500 Questions and Answers About Football*.

Ralph Nelson — Vice President of Umpiring for Major League Baseball; retired major college basketball referee; former San Francisco Giants Vice President and Assistant General Manager; Officiating Development Alliance (ODA) member.

Mike Pereira — NFL Director of Officiating; former NFL Supervisor and Western Athletic Conference Supervisor of Officials; retired NFL and major college football official; worked eight college bowl games; Officiating Development Alliance (ODA) member.

Joan Powell — Professional Association of Volleyball Officials President; NASO Board member.

Harvey Ratner — President and Founder of H.R.A. Sports Vision; NASO Education Partner.

Marc Ratner — Nevada State Athletic Commission Executive Director; Southern Nevada commissioner of officials; major college football official; NASO board member.

Jack Roberts — Michigan High School Activities Association Executive Director; creator and editor of *Interscholastic Athletic Administration* magazine and co-author of *More Than Winning*; NASO Board member.

Bernie Saggau — Iowa High School Athletic Association Executive Director; NFHS Past President; former high school and college basketball and football official; 1996 NASO Gold Whistle Award winner.

Dan Salzwedel — New Mexico Activities Association Executive Director; NFHS Board of Directors member; served on numerous NFHS committees including sportsmanship and football and basketball rules.

Jerry Seeman — NFL officiating consultant; former NFL Senior Director of Officiating; retired NFL official; officiated two Super Bowls and two Pro Bowls; 2001 NASO Medallion Award winner.

Pat Smith — United States Soccer Federation (USSF) National Assessor and National Instructor; former USSF National Referee Committee and National Director of Assessment; former American Soccer League Director of Officials; former NISOA President; National Soccer Hall of Fame inductee.

Bob Still — *Referee* and NASO Communications and Development Manager and editor of *It's Official*; umpired the 2002 NCAA Division III College World Series; high school football official.

Jeff Stern — Associate editor of *Referee* with specific responsibility for football and baseball coverage; active high school and college football official; former baseball, basketball, wrestling and softball official.

Mary Struckhoff — NFHS Assistant Director; NFHS Administrator for Officials' Training; major college women's basketball and former women's volleyball official; former Illinois High School Association Assistant Executive Director; Officiating Development Alliance (ODA) member.

Bill Topp — Editor of *Referee* magazine with specific responsibility for basketball coverage; high school and college basketball and football official; former major college baseball umpire; 2000 NCAA Div. III World Series umpire; Officiating Development Alliance (ODA) member.

Marcy Weston — Central Michigan University Senior Associate Athletic Director and NCAA National Coordinator of Women's Basketball Officiating; Big 10 women's basketball supervisor; Women's Basketball Hall of Fame inductee; NASO Board chair; Officiating Development Alliance (ODA) member.

Gary Whelchel — Arizona Interscholastic Association Commissioner of Officials; high school basketball, softball and volleyball official; worked numerous basketball and volleyball championships; former NASO Board Chair.

Henry Zaborniak Jr. — Ohio High School Athletic Association Assistant Commissioner; current major college football official; former collegiate women's and men's basketball and retired NFL Europe official.

About the Author:

Dave Sabaini is a football, baseball and basketball official from Terre Haute, Ind., where he serves as the treasurer of the Wabash Valley Officials Association. Additionally, Sabaini is the head official for the Vigo County Youth Football League in Terre Haute. He is employed as the director of audio operations at Indiana State University. Sabaini's writing credits include *Referee* magazine and *Officials Quarterly*; he also serves on the NFOA publications committee.

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