

MEN'S LACROSSE OFFICIALS OBSERVING 101

WHY OBSERVE?

- Primarily to educate and inspire local officials using nationwide standardized information.
- Secondarily to identify talented officials and/or rate officials in an association.

TERMINOLOGY

- Observing is often called evaluating or assessing. All describe seeing officials perform on the field during a game.
- Observing is a subset of overall training. Training also includes pre-season clinics, Convention presentations, and rules/mechanics tests, etc.

WHO SHOULD OBSERVE?

- Past and present officials with a passion for the sport and for teaching.
- Great officials do not always make great teachers.
- Observers must know current rules and mechanics.
- Observers must be good verbal and written communicators.
- Peer evaluations within an association come with a caveat: sometimes lead to “good old boy network.”
- Trained assignors (they get to see their pool of officials firsthand)

WHO IS BEING OBSERVED?

- Rookies. May need “shadowing” on the field.
- Newer officials. Limited capacity to process advice given during a game.
- Rookies and newer officials need black-and-white suggestions. “Stand still and take your time in relaying a penalty to the table.”
- More experienced officials. These officials have greater capacity to process advice given during a game. These officials can process more gray area issues. “What was your criteria for stalling at the end of the second half?”

WHO FUNDS THE OBSERVATIONS?

- Most often it is the local association of officials.
- Sometimes officials pay for their own evaluations.
- Seek financial help from local US Lacrosse chapter.
- Observer fees differ across the country from \$20 for observing one person to a full game fee for observing two officials at a game plus some or all mileage.
- Scott Boyle Memorial Observers Program through US Lacrosse

WHICH GAMES TO OBSERVE?

- Less formal/competitive games allow rookies to make mistakes.
- Structured, formal, competitive games using rules and procedures that the officials will see during their regular seasons are best for officials with at least some experience.

HOW MANY OBSERVATIONS?

- Depends on number of observers in an association, time and availability, and budget.
- Rookies and newer officials gain from an early observation and then a later one to determine progress.
- Experienced officials should be observed once a year if possible.
- Second observation later in the year should be done by another observer.

WHERE ON SITE SHOULD GAMES BE OBSERVED?

- Bench side above and away from the table area is best to both see the field and hear the interactions with table and coaches.
- Away from spectators if possible. If not possible, be inconspicuous and quiet with comments.
- Avoid being physically present in the table area as it invites comments/appeals from coaches
- If possible, have a writer who jots down legible notes from the observer who does not need to take his eyes off the field. (This is a luxury)
- If possible, have someone film the official in action. (This is a luxury) Remember that a team's game film is ball-focused and not official-focused.

WHAT DO OBSERVERS WATCH?

- Appearance, mechanics, positioning, signals, judgment, consistency, communication with table/coaches/players/partners, body language, mobility, game management. Note: these items are listed on the LAREDO 2 "check list" that LAREDO clinicians fill out for US Lacrosse on each trainee.
- Observers need to be aware of different styles of officiating and not necessarily look for officials who "ref like me."

ANNOUNCED OR UNANNOUNCED OBSERVATIONS?

- Announced is better for rookies/newer officials.
- Announced allows the observer to visit the pre-game.
- Announced allows observers to learn when trainees would like advice during the game.
- Unannounced allows observer to see trainee in action when he thinks no one is watching.

WHEN DO OBSERVERS GIVE FEEDBACK TO ON-FIELD OFFICIALS?

- Ask the trainees on the field prior to the game when/how would be best.
- Less formal settings allow "shadowing" on the field or advice from sidelines during action. Or during timeouts.
- More formal games have end-of-period stick checks so half time is best (away from players and coaches and spectators if possible).
- People learn most completely when they hear something, see something, verbalize something, and do something: touch all learning styles.
- End of game (away from players and spectators and coaches). How much time is available? Parking lot? Car? Nearby restaurant?
- Email after the game. Sooner is better than later (game still fresh).

TIPS ON GIVING FEEDBACK

- Delivered with a smile and some humor.
- Start with general game observations and then go to specifics.
- Engage the officials with questions. Socratic method.
- At halftime give just 2 points an official can work on during the second half.
- Start with two positive items the trainee did. Everyone does something right!
- “If you want an official to correct something, give a REASON why it needs correction and WAYS to correct it.

Useful Phrases:

- “Ref the game and not the evaluation.”
- “Talk through that slash call in the first period at 4:15.”
- “What was the most crucial moment of the second period?”
- “Describe the pace/flow of the game so far.”
- “What did you and your partner discuss prior to the third faceoff of the game?”
- “What has been the penalty count so far on each team? The loose-ball infractions count?”
- “I suggested 2 items to work on the second half. How did that go?”
- “What have you done well so far this game?”
- “If you could change anything in the game you just worked, what would it be?”
- “You might want to consider doing...” is better than “You should/must do...”
- “I had that same issue when I started officiating and here is what worked for me...”
- “Are the faceoff violations something the players are doing or is it something you are doing?”
- “Remember to work as hard officiating the dead-ball time as you do the live-ball time.”
- “How can you help your partner anticipate the next play?”

Useful Tips:

We are here to get better not to feel better (but best if we can do both)

Open-ended questions require a full answer and not just a one-word answer.

Start sentences off with “Could” rather than “Why.”

Sit in a chair, lean forward and maintain good eye contact...don't converse while standing up or getting dressed or distracted doing something else (cell phone?)

If you see an official a second time during that season, point out their improvements made since the last observation.