

Cris Maloney's Pre-Season Reminders from the "Field Hockey Discussion Forum" on Facebook, published in early September, 2019.

UMPIRES | Season Reminders | #1 of 4

Arrive to the field together (wait in the parking lot for your umpiring buddy before going to the field), walk from the lot to the field shoulder to shoulder — you are one of the teams arriving for the game, look like it.

Put your excess gear at the table and walk/jog the field together. Start with the perimeter, check/clear the officiating space just outside the field. NOTHING (except for the goals and corner flags) should be within 5 yards of the sidelines AND end-lines -- especially the half of the end-line where you might need to be when play is in "your" circle. As you pass the team benches, remind any team personnel to clear away (put behind the bench) any water bottles, extra sticks, balls, etc. As you go around the field, note line colors; step off stroke mark (if "weird", get it measured/measure it); make sure corner flags are present and just touching the corners (at the corner — not on it, not away from it); check that goals are present and just touching the goal-line (at the goal-line — not on it, not away from it); check the netting; and check that the penalty corner insertion and proximity marks are present and proper. Continue your inspection by walking/jogging with your partner in decreasing widths and lengths (concentric ovals). Check other field markings — circles, broken line circles, etc., noting colors; and look to see if there is any damage to the field (pot holes -- or mud holes -- on grass fields and broken seams on synthetic surfaces, making note of anything that might be a hazard). Finish at the table and ask the scorer and timekeeper if they have been properly trained by their teams (give pointers if needed).

Remain at the table and call the captains and head coaches over for the pre-game meeting.

NEXT POST: The Pre-Game Meeting (the power of V-NIC)

UMPIRES | Season Reminders | #2 of 4

The Pre-Game Meeting

A driving force for a meeting with the captains and coaches is that from greetings to coin toss, the whole thing should not take longer than 90 seconds. Under no normal circumstances should the meeting extend to the 2-minute mark. If it gets to be that long, you should be shaking from discomfort.

Meet at the scorer's table. There is no reason to take the captains out to the middle of the field like this is a made for TV moment...unless, of course, the game is being broadcast and/or you've got a couple of Olympians doing a ceremonial coin toss!

To consistently meet the goal of honoring the time the meeting is taking away from each team's final preparations and to demonstrate that neither umpire is "in charge" or has a high authority than the other, stand shoulder to shoulder and share the execution of the NIC protocol (V-NIC for high schools).

V = Umpire 1: Ask the head coaches to Verify that their athletes are legally equipped (they have to say, "Yes," not things like, "*To the best of my knowledge*," or, "*They were when we got here*." This is a high school only requirement. If there is a local requirement to do so, read the sportsmanship message. In some areas, I've seen coaches depart as soon as their verification responsibility is completed (at other levels, coaches seldom attend).

N = Umpire 2: Get the Names of the captains, write them down, and begin using the captain's names during the meeting so you're ready to use them during play. Some people say don't use names. Why? How does that serve the game? When in life does anyone WANT to be called by a number like we're a piece of meat? When does that ever help build rapport with the players -- and, yes, field hockey umpires are expected to build a rapport with the players. Not many of us can learn dozens of names in an instant but, we can certainly learn the name of the speaking captain for each team. Also, consider the level. College players certainly expect other adults to use their names and, even middle school players are called by their names all day long in school. They're not asked things like, "*Captain, in what year was the war of 1812 fought?*" and they certainly never hear someone say, "*What's 3 times 7, 21?*" Use people's names.

I = Umpire 1: Deliver the umpiring team's Inspection report of the field (typically line colors). This is a good opportunity to remind the captains, uh, I mean Sam and Sal, to remind their teammates to not leave sticks and water bottles between the sideline and bench, *"Because that's officiating space and, I need that space to run in."*

C = Umpire 2: Always end with the Coin toss. Before tossing the coin, ask Sal and Sam, if they know the decision they'll make if they win the toss. Show them what side of your coin is heads and which side is tails. Tell Sal (the visiting team's captain), *"Okay, Sal, call it in the air."* Flip the coin into the air and let the coin fall to the ground. While the coin is on the ground, determine and announce its landing. *"Sam, it looks like Sal has [won/lost] the toss. So, [Sal/Sam], what do you want to do? Defend a particular goal first or start with possession?"*

After the coin is tossed and the start-of-game decisions are made, wish the athletes good luck and depart.

Do NOT finish by asking *"So, are there any questions?"*

NEXT POST: Carding (whistle-point-swipe) and Time Outs (if any)

UMPIRES | Season Reminders | #3 of 4

Carding (whistle-point-swipe) and Time Outs (NFHS only)

CARDING

Once in a rare while, extending the carding procedure can be used as a means of allowing tempers to cool off. However, in 99% of the situations, we are looking to achieve the tiniest delay in the game as possible. The entire procedure can be completed in a few breaths (which is why in NCAA and other games the clock doesn't have to be stopped). Here's the process I recommend...

1. Blow Long Loud Whistle (everyone should know that THIS whistle is different than every other whistle they've heard)
2. Show Time Out (required only in NFHS games)
3. Point at the player you're suspending
4. Swipe the player using the internationally recognized sign that says, "Go to the table"
5. Pull Card from Pocket and Show Card Overhead as the suspended player departs (and give time if yellow)
6. Show appropriate misconduct signal
7. Record Suspension Info (MatchSKINS.com)
8. Return Card to Pocket
9. Whistle

A friend said he prefers this order/process...

1. Blow Long Loud Whistle
2. Pull Card from Pocket
3. Point at the player you're suspending using the card they're getting
4. Brush the player from the game using the card to "brush" the player to the table
5. Show Card Overhead (as the suspended player departs and show time if yellow)
6. Show appropriate misconduct signal
7. Record Suspension Info (MatchSKINS.com)
8. Return Card to Pocket
9. Whistle

Either of those are fine because they won't interrupt the game for more than a few seconds.

Do NOT, "Beckon the offending player towards you (player walks two-thirds of the distance and the official walks one-third)," which is -- word for word -- the guidance given in the Officials Guide in the back of NFHS rule book. What are you going to do, give the player a lecture? Just send them off using either of the procedures outlines above.

IMPORTANT: You should never wait for the player to leave the field -- we want people watching the athletes play, not the player who was just suspended saunter off the field or become a side show. If they interfere with play while leaving the game, "upgrade" the card (extend the suspension time or if in NFHS game, give an additional, more severe card)

TIMEOUTS

There are no longer any timeouts in NCAA games. The only timeouts that remain are those allowed for in NFHS games.

The high school timeout is 90-seconds long (repeat that until it sinks in).

The timeout starts when the umpire blows their whistle, signals timeout, and the clock is stopped (repeat THAT until it sinks in).

Said another way, the umpire should blow their whistle 90-seconds after they stop the clock and, if either team isn't ready to play 5-seconds later, the appropriate misconduct penalty should be given to the head coach (Rule 4.2.PENALTIES.1).

NOTE: Timeouts don't begin after the players leisurely walk off the field, pull off their goggles, grab their water bottles, and FINALLY get together as a team. Timeouts begin as soon as the clock stops. It's a big field, chances are, if the players aren't running off the field they will not have time for their timeout. And, if the players are slow to get together, it means the umpires who came before you were not managing the game correctly.

NEXT POST: Pet Peeves (one of them is the 3-minute high school timeout!!!)

UMPIRES | Season Reminders | #4 of 4

Pet Peeves

UMPIRE ARRIVAL

Umpires should only come onto the field alone if there is an emergency. Ever see the SNL "Really" skits when Seth Meyers and Amy Poehler did Weekend Update? Exactly how I feel when I park, look around for my partner and see them milling around on the field, chatting up the coaches, etc., making it look like I'm late. Wait in the parking lot for the other umpire. Walk in as a team.

MEETINGS WITH CAPTAINS (umpire)

NFHS meetings with the captains should only last about 90-seconds -- even if a sportsmanship message has to be read -- from the intros to "heads or tails" (coin toss is always last). NEVER EVER take longer than 2-minutes. And, unless an Olympian is there to do the coin toss, do not hold the meeting out in the center of the field, midway between the sidelines. Instead, meet at the benches and get the thing done. If you find yourself teaching a rule, you better be one of the coaches (and if you're a coach doing that during the meeting with the captains -- it's too late!). Umpires stand shoulder-to-shoulder, not opposite each other like you're opponents. Get and use the names of captains during the meeting and through out the game.

MEETINGS WITH CAPTAINS (players)

Come to the meeting prepared. Know in advance what you're going to do when the coin is tossed and you're given a choice to make.

CORNER FLAGS (umpires)

Do NOT move the corner flags away from the corners. They are by rule supposed to be at the corner just like goals are supposed to be at the goal-line. Don't begin your outing by breaking the rules!

TALKING TO PLAYERS (umpires)

Yeah, good to do but, remember, the less you say the more value your words have when you use them. If you say, "PLAY" a million times a game, you've missed the point. They ARE playing. Most often, umpires insert themselves into game to tell the athletes to stop playing. Otherwise, "PLAY" is understood. Of course, it can be helpful to let the players know you've decided not to stop them.

TALKING ABOUT PLAYERS/COACHES (umpires)

Uh...no!

USING RADIOS (umpires)

No humming that favorite ditty that you can't get out of YOUR head. I don't need it in mine. No constant talk, talk, talking. Rarely offer information except in response to a question. The biggest fallacy about radios that use secure, encrypted communications technology is that only your partner can hear you. The ear piece gives you a false sense of security because you think you're having a private conversation. You are not. People around you can hear you. Only ever say things that you would be happy to see quoted above the fold on the front page of The New York Times.

CARDING (umpires)

Whistle. Point. Swipe. Do NOT wait for the player to leave the field before restarting the game. Don't go out of your way to speak with the player being suspended (don't make them come to you so you can have a word with them either). People came to watch a game, not an umpire chat up a player for being bad.

CARDING (players)

Yes. You! Run off the field and get your butt in the chair so the timer can begin your suspension.

SUBSTITUTES (as in the players who are substituting)

Move back from the line when the ball is within 15 yards of the sideline (if you don't you're blocking the umpire)

COVERED ELASTICS (umpires)

When a player with long hair puts a covered elastic on their wrist, the covered elastic does NOT magically become jewelry. It is still a soft hair control device and, by rule, they are allowed. Do you think this is more dangerous than the carbon-fiber stick the players are using or the metal goggles they're wearing? Get a clue!

TIMEOUTS (high schools)

Timeouts last only 90 seconds -- not 3 to 4 minutes! Umpires: Prior to game remind the timer that by rule they are to sound the horn with 15 seconds to go. They should sound the horn again at 90 seconds. At 91 seconds the umpire should signal time in. If the players aren't ready to go at 96 seconds (the high school 5 second RULE), the head coach -- by rule -- has to be dealt with via misconduct parameters.

SIDELINE (umpires)

The sideline is part of the field. Don't make players "move the ball in" if they put the ball on the sideline to restart play after a foul near the sideline. If the ball is on the sideline, it's already in!!

SIDELINE II (umpires)

I don't lose sleep if there's a side-in (when the ball has to be restarted from the sideline) if the player puts the ball down and it's really close to the sideline but not actually on it...UNLESS...they put the ball down outside the field. What if they hit the ball and they shank it and it never comes onto the field? What if they self start and don't come immediately into the field? Is 1 yard okay, 5 yards? I suppose I wouldn't lose sleep over this either but, if the

restarter screws up, I'm certainly giving possession to the other team. If I don't catch it in time, I only interfere if they screw it up.

WATCH OUT FOR RITA (umpires)

Obstruction is a foul. If someone obstructs, we don't say, "Try again." Kicking the ball is a foul. If someone kicks the ball, we don't say, "Try again." (although I do tell 5-year olds to "Try not to kick the ball."). In both those cases we give the ball to the other team. Guess what else is against the rules? Restarting play in the wrong location. Don't give a RITA (RESET IT TRY AGAIN) to a team when you have zero doubt that the player who broke the rules knew where the foul happened and was instead of restarting play within playing distance of where the foul was, restarting from "over there". Reverse play one time and you'll be amazed at how quickly all the players will suddenly know exactly where to take 99.9% of the restarts.

RESTARTS (players)

Learn the rules regarding where restarts have to be taken.

ICE (players)

Indirect Circle Entry requirements for attacking free hits inside the 25 require that you don't hit the ball directly into the circle from a free hit. When you have an attacking free hits inside the 25 and everyone and your grandmother is yelling, "Go five. Go five!" ... don't hit the ball directly into the circle.

FANS (fans)

Nothing you say to the umpire calling "your" game will change the umpire you got...just like nothing you say on game day will change the surface or the weather (or your kid's skill level). And, if you've got an umpire challenged by the game -- negative public comments are going to make the game exponentially more challenging for that umpire. In short, YOU will make things worse for the players. Is THAT your goal? Cheer for your team.

POST GAME LINE UP (players)

Nothing is less sincere than forcing players to line up and walk by each other chanting, "G'game. G'game. G'game. G'game. G'game. G'game. Thank you fans. Thank you officials." This ritual is actually codified into the high school regulations in Massachusetts (oh well, at least the MIAA doesn't require single-gender teams). When the game is over, you're on the field, near those who you just competed against. They gave you the opportunity to play. Turn around and go shake their hands right then and there. Avoid the player you "hated" if you're not grown up enough to look them in the eye and say, "Thanks." Give a word of thanks to the umpires as you pass them (shake their hands or not but say thanks). Wave to your fans. Likelihood that this will change soon... uh ...zero.

HIGH SCHOOL UMPIRE ASSOCIATIONS

Leadership forcing umpires new to the association but with years of umpiring experience (for example, umpiring at the college level) to be a "Cadet" for two years serves the game how? The only thing I can think of is that what the leadership of those associations are most interested in doing is keeping the varsity money to themselves.

ASSIGNERS

You should get paid by the schools and not collect a "finder's fee" or "tax" or "cut" or "kickback" from the umpires. Do you have an umpire shortage in your area? If so, assigners should basically be considering how they could pay umpires to fill the games!

List your pet peeves below and, have a great season everyone!