

Dealing With Head Coaches – 2014

(Update of Ron Patry's 2011 Presentation)

1. **Introduce Yourself** – Part of pre-game should include introducing yourself to the Head Coach and setting your sideline expectations (calling timeouts, players and coach positioning, how communication with players will be handled).
2. **Make Eye Contact** - A coach wants to be assured that he has your attention. Don't act distracted.
3. **No First Name** - Never call coaches by their first names. They'll feel most comfortable, particularly in front of their players, simply by being called "Coach." If you know their last name go with "Coach Smith".
4. **Show Respect to Get Respect** - That means using formal language, keeping communication brief, adopting a neutral tone and avoiding any personal remarks.

Stick to the issue at hand in a straightforward way.

5. **Ask Coach to Deal with Problem Player -** Be sure to identify the problem in explicit terms, without making the player to be an evil person. Sometimes that is hard to do, but can be accomplished with a careful choice of language.
6. **Stay Calm and Carry On –** Stay calm under all circumstances. If a coach moves toward you to “get in your face”, pivot sideways so that you are shoulder-to-shoulder. It is hard for someone to speak in an aggressive, confrontational way when the proximity between parties is side-by-side.
7. **Let Coaches Vent -** When a coach approaches to protest or argue, adopt an instant “listening mode” and let the aggrieved individual finish his remarks. Do not interrupt.

8. **Neutral Body Language** - Use non-confrontational body language. To be aware of body posture, facial expression, head tilt and arm position, one must say, “I am going to appear receptive and contemplative. I can think best and measure my words that way. I am determined to not escalate the problem.”
Smart-Pose!
9. **When You Blow It Admit It** - A simple apology is sufficient; do not elaborate or rationalize (i.e., make excuses). “Sorry coach, I missed that call and feel bad. Let’s get back to the job at hand so you can coach and I can officiate better, thank you”.
10. **Coaches Voice Up Yours Down** - A soft voice has a way of triggering a reciprocal soft reply.
11. **Get Both Coaches Together** – Some examples:
 - a) Reach a uniform agreement

- b) Weather problems
- c) Clock problems or game equipment
- d) Player Behavior – “Chippy Play”

12. **Support Fellow Officials** - Never betray partners by showing that you doubt their judgment. Instead indicate faith in someone else’s decision by saying the partner had a better view of a more favorable angle than the responding official or protester.

Never: that’s not my call, I think he blew it, you are right that was a bad call

Always: when we get a stoppage I’ll ask him what he saw on that play.

13. **Acknowledge the Coach** - “I hear what you’re saying.” “I understand” or “I see what you mean” are equally effective. If the next sensible step is to confer with a partner over a controversy, make that next move firmly. If you have to conference (i.e. called face mask and it was on the shirt) do it away from the sidelines and be receptive.

14. **Praise When Proper**- When a coach makes a gesture of consideration for the opponents or toward the officials, be sure to acknowledge it. Sometimes a smile and a nod of the head are enough.
15. **Step Inside the Coaches Shoes** - Put yourself in their shoes just as you would in trying to understand a player's viewpoint. That means having some insight about a coach's motivation and overall goal. Sometimes how the coach will be viewed in the eyes of players and team supporters is the primary stimulus for behavior.
16. **Keep Your Ego Under Control** - . Often a mere glance will carry a significant message, whether it's negative or positive, whether it is meant to curtail dialogue or to encourage it. A quizzical expression can signal a desire for additional input, where as a frown may denote closure.

17. **Give the Coach the Benefit of Doubt** - If you are uncertain about the accuracy of a ruling, make a decision and tell the coach what you believe is correct. Avoid being too adamant about a rule interpretation. Someone has defined the word positive as “being wrong at the top of your voice.”
Coach, this is what I saw
18. **Permit Coach to Disengage** - Recognize (through facial expression, body language, and terminating vocal patterns) when it is time to cease a dialogue. Nothing is gained by insisting on the last word. This is NOT MLB!
19. **Don't Use Your Hands** - when talking to a coach. Your gestures will reveal more than you'll want to convey.
20. **“We Play Till the Whistle”** - explain that the play kills itself and the ball becomes dead once the player is down. You can remind him it is a safety issue just because I

missed my month or the whistle was
broken does not mean anyone get a free
shot.