

Road to the Top

Submitted by Bruce Covert
Supervisor Ontario

One of the most frequently asked questions at camps and throughout the year locally is “How do I get better games?” Following are some tips that might help.

Set realistic goals

You should set both short and long term goals. Have a goal for the year. Have a two or three-year goal. These goals should be evaluated at the end of each year. Did you achieve your goal? If so, was it too easy? If not, was it unrealistic? Goal setting may be affected by age. If you start officiating at 20,30 or 40 you may have to set different goals. If you are 20 years old, working towards a FIBA license or a CIS career may be realistic, but not so in many contexts if you are starting at 35.

Attend clinics and camps

No matter how experienced you are there is always something to be learned by attending a camp. Attending camps and clinics are also excellent ways to network and find a mentor. Watch other officials. It amazes me that some officials who wish to work at the CIS level are never in the stands watching games. Much can be learned from observing the elite officials on a panel or in your board. Why are they successful? What works for them? How do they interact with coaches? How do they handle players? Watch them to learn, not to criticize. If you watch enough games you will see a wide variety of game situations. How were they handled? How would you have handled them? Observing others and incorporating successful techniques that fit your personality can help you develop your own style.

Rule knowledge

There is no excuse for you not to be a rule expert. Do not rely on others. Excellent rule knowledge can help your credibility, especially when you are just starting your officiating career.

Supportive family

There will be times that officiating will interfere with your family life. If your spouse, partner or children do not understand what it is you are doing and why you are doing it, achieving your officiating goals can be very difficult. Include them, if possible. It is always a good idea to use your officiating money for a family holiday, gift, etc.

Find a mentor

Seek out someone you respect and someone that respects what you're trying to achieve. Ideally this person will be someone in a position to help; a well respected official within your local board, a member of your local board or provincial executive.

Get Involved

Contribute to your board locally. Volunteer to help whenever you can. Attend local board meetings, provincial clinics, etc. Being seen at these events will help you build your profile both locally and provincially.

Confidence vs arrogance

There is a very fine line between the two. Don't cross it. As you become more experienced and start getting better assignments, don't strut. Don't come in to your pre-game and brag about your accomplishments, or the “big” game you did last week. The reality is that your partner probably doesn't care.

Patience

You may have heard the expression that it is “Better to be a year late, than a year early”. We all think we are ready before we are. If you are good enough you will get your chance. Work hard to be ready when it comes, even if it comes a year later than you would like.

Avoid irritants you can control

There are some things that are beyond your control. If you are 5 ft 6 you can't make yourself 6 feet tall. Don't spend time worrying about those things, but do address the things you can control. Facial hair. Glasses. Weight. Uniform. Hair length. When in doubt turn on the TV and look at an NCAA game or an NBA game. That will give you a good model of the “look” of the ideal official.

Geography

Accept where you live and the level of basketball in the area. If it is not good what can you do? Can you join another board? Can you go to an identification camp to be seen by a panel supervisor? If there is nothing you can do, accept it. You can always work to be the very best official in your local area.

Above all, work hard in every game you do, no matter what the level, no matter what the score. Remember, you never know who is watching.