



October 29, 2019

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Greetings to all officials:

As the exhibition season gets started, I want to wish you the very best season possible.

During our Regional Clinics, I spoke about a recently completed officiating strategic assessment. In the fall of 2018, the NCAA hired Trip Durham, 2D Consulting, to conduct interviews to strategically assess the perception of men's college basketball officiating. I have attached the full summary report to this memo and hope you will take the time to review it.

There are six main takeaways from the officiating strategic assessment:

1. Mannerism/body language matters to the perception of officials.
2. Humanity of officials – officials stories need to be told.
3. Communication matters to the perception of officials.
4. Leadership among officials needs to be enhanced.
5. Mechanics matter to the perception of officials.
6. A National Officiating Program needs to be developed.

I hope that this information will enhance your efforts to impact the perception of men's college basketball officiating.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.D. Collins".

J.D. Collins
National Coordinator
Men's Basketball Officiating

National Collegiate Athletic Association

Creating a pathway to opportunity for college athletes

The NCAA is an equal opportunity employer that values inclusive excellence in the workplace.



Spring 2019

Overview

During the 2018-19 academic year, an assessment of NCAA men's basketball officiating was commissioned by the NCAA and J.D. Collins, National Coordinator of NCAA Men's Basketball Officials. The intent was to identify opportunities to increase the perception and image of officiating and to consistently enhance telling the story of a group of professionals who set the standard for officiating as an industry. In total, 37 principles and stakeholders were interviewed by 2D Consulting, LLC (2D). Those people interviewed were not only the peers of the officials (coordinators and conference administrative contacts) but also those who work with the officials throughout the season (athletic directors, coaches, NCAA staff, and commissioners).

Purpose

2D was tasked to establish the attributes and liabilities of the NCAA men's basketball officiating industry. Gathering feedback as to the perception and image was tantamount in this process. The interviews conducted involved the asking of as many as 32 different questions. There were over 500 answers/opinions provided by those interviewed. Those "findings" have contributed to this executive summary.

At the direction of Mr. Collins, 2D was tasked with analyzing the "findings," extracting the common themes to design a list of points that could be shared with key constituents. The following pages will present six areas that should be our concentration during the 2019-20 academic year. Beyond the upcoming season, these action items should be a constant focus of NCAA men's basketball officiating.

Steps to Success

There are both short term talking points and strategic action items included in this document and it is important that we consider and act upon all of them.

Short Term Talking Point #1 – Mannerisms/Body Language

Throughout the assessment, nearly every person offered thoughts about how the physical movements of our officials project a tone that, in various circumstances (ex., an energized arena, a tight game, a physical series of plays, etc.), is received as being either unnoticed or unflattering. We must communicate that our mannerisms show we have confidence as opposed to arrogance, we are of service as opposed to being self-centered, we are enthusiastic versus being lethargic, we are poised versus disordered, and that we are aware as opposed to being ignorant. **Solution:** We should work towards understanding the messages we convey through our physical movements. When establishing positive mannerisms that are both consistent and visually accepted by coaches, student-athletes and fans, it is only then are we able to build confidence and trust by all of those participating in the game.

Strategic Action Item – Mannerisms/Body Language

Our coordinators should design **a program** that reinforces to every official, regardless of their length of service to our industry, the impact of positive and negative body language and how mannerisms lead to desired and undesired reactions from the participants of the game.

The program should include, but not be limited to the following three elements:

- A measurement tool that tracks the *quality* of body language presentation should be created, and it should be incorporated into the evaluation tool/report card from every regular season game. This element of the report card will allow an official to watch his/her progression throughout the weeks and months of the season.
- Inserting into all camps and clinics a session on body language and mannerisms. These sessions should be dedicated to the physical presentation of an official and the sharing of best practices.
- Encouraging officials to read books and watch videos that offer insights and coaching on body language and mannerisms. Continuing education on this front will allow officials further opportunity to be self-reflective and to grow.

Short Term Talking Point #2 – Humanity

Some derivation of the word “human” was used by each of the 37 people who took part in this assessment. Society is predisposed to be leery of officials, arbiters, and judges and to naturally form a negative opinion if those presiding appear to be “inhuman.” We must be vigilant in reminding ourselves that we have an opportunity to express empathy while carrying out the duties of an NCAA men’s basketball official. In doing so, we will be able to connect ourselves in a more meaningful way to the stakeholders of the game. **Solution:** On the court, we should work towards striking a balance between interacting with the participants in a knowledgeable, authoritative style and with presenting an image that conveys a genuine message. It would help how people perceive us if we recognize and act upon moments to educate and inform all the participants. It would serve us to be congenial and cordial with the fans on game day. Off the court, throughout the course of the year, we need to identify opportunities to interact with people in our home communities and with those in our social media networks. While we are expected to manage the contest with intense focus, we cannot be so rigid in our persona that coordinators, coaches, administrators, student-athletes and fans are unable to see that we have passion for the game and empathize for those who have a stake in the game.

Strategic Action Item – Humanity

Our coordinators, in collaboration with our conference administrators, should create a **plan** that is deliberate in telling the story of our officials. For the mediums of social and traditional media, design a calendar for the the academic year, one that is intentional about highlighting their education, their on-going training, their service in their communities, as well as the lengths our officials go to be stewards of the game. Introducing our officials to a variety of different constituent groups during the season (and after) will allow us an opportunity to humanize the industry of NCAA men’s basketball officiating.

A plan should include, but not be limited to the following three elements:

- Each conference office creating at least one video profile package per month (a total of five during the season) with a story telling methodology for staff and coordinators that creates a narrative of men’s basketball officiating.
- Each conference office developing a social media calendar which allows for not only the video packages as described above to be distributed, but also to consistently extol important information (ex., call rate success percentages) which contributes to a positive image and perception.
- Each conference office collaborating with their coordinators to learn what community public/civic work officials perform during the off-season thus perpetuating the narrative of men’s basketball officiating.

Short Term Talking Point #3 – Communication

Many of those who took part in the interview process claimed that those who excel as officials are perceived as being proficient in communication. Conversely, it was evident that many of the 37 felt the officials' and the officiating industry's image both suffer greatly when communication is poor and when the official does not allow for constructive dialogue. **Solution:** We need to work towards understanding that effective communication can both enhance the management of the game and, if done well, can avert tense situations that naturally occur. Coordinators must consider taking on more of the persona of being an educator, teaching our officials to enhance their communication skills. It is vital for us to be more proficient in this area. If communication is solid throughout every game in every region of the country, then the image and perception of NCAA men's basketball officiating will improve.

Strategic Action Item - Communication

Our coordinators should develop **protocol** that places an extreme focus on how we transfer from one official to another best practice examples of open dialogue and conflict resolution. Officials, with varying levels of experience, have an inherent duty to take what they have learned through hundreds of game situations and share them with their colleagues. It should be the responsibility of our coordinators to ensure that every official, from the veteran to the rookie, has the tools to share and to create a "win-win" environment through effective communication.

The **protocol** should include, but not be limited to the following three elements:

- Planning and conducting communication sessions at camps and clinics, discussing best practices while sharing effective and ineffective communication strategies that officials have learned over the years.
- A measurement tool of communication should be created, and it should be incorporated into the evaluation tool/report card from every regular season game. This element of the report card will allow an official to watch his/her progression throughout the weeks and months of the season.
- Require officials to read books on conflict resolution, books such as "BIFF: Quick Responses to High-Conflict People, Their Personal Attacks, Hostile Email and Social Media Meltdowns" and "How to Say Anything to Anyone: A Guide to Building Business Relationships That Really Work."

Short Term Talking Point #4 – Leadership

A philosopher in the 20th century once noted, “A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better.” As made clear through this assessment, perception and image of the industry of NCAA men’s basketball officiating is directly tied to those who are individual leaders, both on and off the court. Whether leadership is displayed within the crew on the floor each night, or leadership is showcased in how officials lead their personal lives, there are several examples during the interview process in which those who participated associate strong leadership with a strong officiating industry. **Solution:** We should work towards constantly evaluating 1) if we are leaders, 2) if we are acting as leaders, 3) if those starting in the profession need leadership guidance, and 4) if we are contributing to the game in a respectful manner, with integrity. All of this lends itself to how we are perceived, and, in time, our leadership characteristics will be what give each one of us the opportunity to succeed in this profession.

Strategic Action Item – Leadership

Working in concert with one another, coordinators and conference administrators should construct **an organizational structure** by which veteran signal callers are able to support and enhance the industry through the mentorship of other officials. Every action an official makes and every action that is received by the participants of the game becomes a learning moment for other officials. A hierarchy, one that is calculated to mentoring, will develop a long line of leaders for our industry.

An **organizational structure** should include, but not be limited to the following three items:

- Establishing a one-on-one mentorship model, aligning every official with less than five years of experience with a veteran official who has at least ten years of experience.
- Include mentorship ratings as part of year end evaluations, ratings which will be based upon journals kept by both the mentors and the mentees.
- Becoming intentional about using a few minutes during every pregame meeting to discuss how the mentor/mentee experience is helping each person. There is a great opportunity to share given that our officials continue to work with different individuals daily.

Short Term Talking Point #5 – Mechanics

Mechanics and our positioning are the foundations by which mannerisms/body language, humanity, communication, and leadership are built for NCAA men's basketball officials. We are more likely to be supported if our mechanics are executed well. Additionally, we are most likely to be criticized when our mechanics are poor. Those interviewed for this project constantly harped on how perception and image stem from the ability (or inability) to be in the correct position, to signal in the proper way, and to articulate the ruling of a situation as clearly as possible. **Solution:** With over 800 officials working games in 50 states, we should work towards getting everyone (officials and coordinators alike) on the same page when it comes to improving perception. It will start with an enhanced awareness of our mechanics. It will take not only the willingness of the officials, but it will also be critical for the coordinators and conference contacts to support the effort. Proper mechanics will indicate a game is being officiated in a fair and agreed upon way, giving both teams equal access to the interpretation of the official. Our narrative as an industry is dependent upon our mechanics.

Strategic Action Item – Mechanics

All stakeholders, especially our coordinators, should fully invest in **standardizing our mechanics** by using the “CCA Mechanics Manual”. In order for our game participants to completely understand our responsibilities, our goals, and the intention of our actions as officials, we *must* convey to every single person that we value the significance of being the official who is going to be in the right position, to make the right call, and do so each and every time.

Standardizing our mechanics should include, but not be limited to the following three items:

- Each evaluator should reference at least one call from the “CCA Mechanics Manual” via normal conference communication in providing feedback to the officials.
- The coordinator and the conference officials should establish consistent mechanics testing as part of the conference officiating program.
- Include within the rewards system, as part of conference policy, testing scores for mechanics that factor into the evaluation of conference tournament placement.

Short Term Talking Point #6 – A National Officiating Program

One definition of “perception” is characterized as “a mental impression.” There is one source that defines “image” as “the general impression that a person, organization, or product presents to the public.” While the feedback from those who participated in this program gives a favorable opinion as to the current state of perception and image of our industry, it is clear from the information received that we can improve our impression in the eyes of all our constituent groups by working under a singular national program. While examples of such comments are listed on the final page of this report, it is important to know that many of the remarks received, through a variety of questions, all point to creating a more structured officiating enterprise which, in turn, will lead to greater continuity and better consistency. **Solution:** We should increase our pace in undertaking the exploratory process, in earnest, of developing a national program, one that will allow for a stronger and more respected college basketball officiating industry. Both the data revealed through this assessment and the rhetoric being generated throughout the country with regards to the role officiating has in our sports culture dictate that now is the time to organize our conversation and develop a framework so that NCAA men’s basketball officiating can be regarded as a premier program.

Strategic Action Item – A National Officiating Program

Our conference administrators and commissioners should move towards embracing standardization. With their assistance, we should commission a “white paper” with each conference office contributing their vision for a national program. Every stakeholder and every principal should have an avenue to offer feedback as we build towards this new model.

As of June of 2019, we are developing a timeline on the “white paper”, a timeline that will be in place by January 1, 2020. We will include communication with the membership as part of the timeline work and we will develop a committee by which to craft a “white paper.” During this same planning period, the national coordinator will set a calendar for completion of the project.

In order to offer a more in-depth account of what was learned during this assessment and what led to the short term talking points and strategic action items, an outline of each point will be presented on the following pages. The direct quotes from those interviewed will appear inside quotation marks. Other comments, which have been paraphrased, will not appear in quotation marks.

Our coordinators and our officials must be vigilant in working on these six points of emphasis. Without you, change is not possible.

You are the influencer and you can affect the culture of NCAA men's basketball officiating.

Below is feedback from four participants that supports the need to be aware of “Mannerisms/Body Language.” Further, such reactions give reason that we should make this a point of action moving forward.

Question: What is the ideal perception and image you would like the NCAA men’s basketball officials (or the profession) to project?

Response from Coordinator #1 - “Neutral, professional, not seeking the limelight and not being part of the game, so to speak.”

Prompt: Offer a few examples of how officials lift and support the perception and image of NCAA men’s basketball officiating.

Response from Interview #5 - “Calm demeanor during the game.” Having the ability to subjectively understand the coaches during the game.

Question: What are the action steps needed to improve the image of NCAA men’s basketball officiating?

Response from Interview #3 - “You are dealing with so many personalities” and they all need to be aware of perception. Perception needs to be a conversation. To hear criticism six days a week through the course of the season must have an effect. Officials need to be accepted by all key constituents in order to earn their trust.

Question: Is the perception tied more to the personality of each NCAA official or to the profession of collegiate men’s basketball officiating?

Response from Contact #3 - “An official’s personality and presentation figures greatly into the industry.” “The best officials are the one that project confidence without overexpression.”

Below is feedback from four participants that supports the need to be aware of “Humanity.” Further, such reactions give reason that we should make this a point of action moving forward.

Question: What is the ideal perception and image you would like the NCAA men’s basketball officials (or the profession) to project?

Response from Coordinator #2 - “Capable, competent, and quality.” It will make them stand out if they check these three boxes. “Be approachable, tone yourself down if you are giving off a vibe.” “Everyone brings a unique quality to this profession.”

Response from Committee Member #2 - “Two things: professionalism and integrity.” “When you see him take the floor, you want to feel they have integrity.”

Prompt: Offer a few examples of how officials lift and support the perception and image of NCAA men’s basketball officiating.

Response from Interview #3 - When they are in their home communities and they perform charitable acts. When they are on the floor, they are disciplined in every action they take.

Question: When you hear the words, “NCAA Men’s Basketball Official,” what immediately comes to mind?

Response from Commissioner #6 - “Hard working, dedicated, sacrificing, yet needing to take more responsibility.”

Below is feedback from eight participants that supports the need to be aware of “Communication.” Further, such reactions give reason that we should make this a point of action moving forward.

When 11 commissioners were asked the question, “What do you think contributes to the positive association between the NCAA men’s basketball official and five different segments of our basketball community (coordinator, head coach, student-athlete, administrator, and fan), a form of the word “communication” was used 12 times in their answers.

For example, Commissioners used these terms and phrases to sum up their thoughts:

Commissioner #2 - “Good communication”

Commissioner #4 - “Honest communications”

Commissioner #8 - “Communication and respect both ways.”

Commissioner #10 - “That he listens.”

Commissioner #11 - “Being a communicator” and “displaying emotional intelligence”

Other questions or prompts for “Communication”:

Prompt: Describe the actions that officials make which contribute to the degradation of the perception of the image.

Response from Coordinator #4 - “How we communicate and handle people and how the game is administered, which, if done poorly, draws negative attention.”

Response from Contact #8 - “When they lose emotional control. When they don’t communicate with one another or others on the floor.”

Question: “What are the attributes and liabilities of an NCAA men’s basketball official?”

Response from Coordinator #7 - The paraphrased responses were – *attributes*, a calm demeanor, a good communicator, a listener, and someone who can articulate. *liabilities* – projecting an image you are right all the time.

Below is feedback from four participants that supports the need to be aware of “Leadership.” Further, such reactions give reason that we should make this a point of action moving forward.

Question: What is the current perception of the NCAA’s men’s basketball official?

Response from Coordinator #3 - “As of today, one thousand percent better than four years ago.” “Teamwork has become a major component in getting better.”

Prompt: Describe the actions that officials make which contribute to the degradation of the perception and image.

Response from Interview #1 - “Behavior that comes across as defensive and combative.” “When they get mouthy it doesn’t help” the crew for that game or the character of the official in the long run.

Question: How do the one thousand officials contribute to the perception?

Response from Contact #1 - “I think there are some that contribute, and you hope it (the positive influences) trickle down. The eight hundredth official probably doesn’t feel as though he is contributing.”

Prompt: Offer a few examples of how officials lift and support the perception and image of NCAA men’s basketball officiating.

Response from Commissioner #4 - “A willingness to learn and to teach. There are good things happening locally and regionally which spins up to the national level.”

Below is feedback from four participants that supports the need to be aware of “Mechanics.” Further, such reactions give reason that we should make this a point of action moving forward.

Prompt: Offer a few examples of how officials lift and support the perception and image of NCAA men’s basketball officiating.

Response from Commissioner #3 - “Officials who communicate effectively with student-athletes, coaches, table crew and television talent lift and support the perception of officiating. Officials who are correct in their mechanics also positively support the image of NCAA basketball officiating.”

Prompt: Describe the actions that officials make which contribute to the degradation of the perception and image.

Response from Contact #2 - “Being confrontational.” “Poor mechanics that give the indication the game is about them.”

Question: How do the one thousand officials contribute to the perception?

Response from Commissioner #7 - “Our officials contribute favorably (to the perception).” “Officiating is a source of stability (when mechanics are good)” in a game with some instability.

Question: What is the ideal perception and image you would like the NCAA men’s basketball officials (or the profession) to project?

Response from Contact #5 - “The best officials are the ones you don’t know are at the game.” Subtle control and able to keep the game moving.

Below is feedback from four participants that supports the need to be explore a “National Officiating Program.” Further, such reactions give reason that we should make this a point of action moving forward.

Question: Is it reasonable to think that we can get one thousand officials on the same page as we start acting to improve the perception?

Response: Contact #7 - “We need a national umbrella to get there.”

Response: Interview #8 - “Sure.” If we create the expectation. We need to set a standard for the future.

Question: Is there a need for a national officiating program?

Response: Commissioner #5 - “I think so.” “The consortium model is really going well on all fronts.” Cooperation among conferences is a solid base for a national program.

Response: Commissioner #9 - “Yes.” Technology and consortiums have us there now.

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