



Guelph Hockey Referee Association Members Information Bulletin 04-3

Subject: Article Attitude and Perception

Date: October, 2003

This article appears on the NHL Officials Web site (www.NHLOfficials.com) and was written by David Baker NHL Technical Manager, Officiating. Please take the time to read it

Attitude and Perception

Monday, April 21, 2003

By David Baker
NHL Technical Manager, Officiating

I think that if any two individual traits can be identified as clear-cut downfalls to becoming a successful official, having a poor attitude and being perceived in a negative light are the two traits that I would select. The attitude with which you approach officiating and the way you are perceived can quickly eliminate you from any aspirations you might have of becoming an official at the upper levels of the game.

A good, positive attitude towards officiating is essential to development. Those who display a positive attitude tend to develop quickly. A good attitude is shown through hustle, determination and enthusiasm. The official never looks bored or acts as if a game assignment is below his or her capabilities. Officials with a good, positive attitude work hard at developing communication with players, coaches and other officials. They don't show off and always give 100% regardless of the game or the situation.

An official with a good attitude accepts constructive criticism. He/she doesn't make excuses, but listens to the supervisor and absorbs what is said. The official with a good attitude will take something from the supervisor's feedback and become a better official. An official with a positive attitude will not "suck-up" to supervisors, assignors and senior officials, but will listen, watch and learn. An official with a good attitude can easily be spotted. He or she is the official who really looks excited about officiating, at any level.

The perceptions given by an official can also be one's downfall. If an official arrives at the arena wearing old clothes, a team jacket and a baseball cap, who is going to think you are there to take charge of 40 hockey players? If an official is willing to put his/her hand out at the end of the day and accept some money for officiating the games, then that official should show up looking and acting in a professional manner.

On-ice mannerisms can also lead to poor perceptions of an official. Body language can send all the wrong messages. If an official stands with his/her arms crossed, this can often be interpreted as being bored, uncaring or uninterested. Hands on the hips may be considered confrontational or impatient. Hands on knees during the play or leaning on the boards can be interpreted as being lazy and/or out of shape. All of these things can work in a negative manner and make the individual's ability to officiate that much more difficult. The job is difficult enough as it is, so why do anything to make it harder?

Also, you must be lead by example. If you are required to wear a helmet and/or a visor, wear them properly. Wear them in the manner they are supposed to be worn as described by the manufacturer and your hockey governing body. How can you enforce rules if you are breaking them? You can't. Dress the

part. Make sure your uniform is clean. White laces and polished skates go a long way to showing your dedication to officiating and the willingness to try your best.

Finally, officials must also remember that the more games they do, the more chances there are that they will be recognized outside of the arena. Here too it is important to be careful how you are perceived. The credibility of an official will most likely be affected if they are seen in a negative light outside the arena by those that may see them with the striped shirt on the next day. Officials must keep this in mind.

A good, positive attitude and the willingness to learn is a key to becoming the best official you can be. This, along with the awareness of how you are perceived on and off the ice, will assist in developing your professional approach to officiating.