



It Doesn't Have to be Lonely at the Top

Many times in the volleyball officiating realm you will find yourself working alone. Due to budget cuts or athletic funds, many schools do not assign two officials for sub-varsity matches. For the newer official, this can be quite challenging, whereas experienced officials (sadly to say) are becoming accustomed to being alone at the top. However, there is no need to panic: you've got this. Remember, the rules have not changed and your protocol as an official remains the same.

Upon arriving at your venue, introduce yourself to the host management and ask if there is a certified athletic trainer on site. Be sure to include this in your post match evaluations if there is not such a person available. Who are your line judges? Keep in mind that they are probably players but "Never fear for a teaching moment is near". This is certainly a chance for you to give instruction and set the tone for how you are going to manage this game. These line judges can be an asset to your officiating experience.

Next introduction should be to the table personnel, especially the scorer and libero tracker. Remember they will become your allies; or can be used as a "sitting" R2 during the match. Again, it is vital that you set up a way of communicating with them for needed information while on the stand. Try not to come off the stand unless absolutely necessary. In your scan of the court before beckoning for service, it would be advantageous for you to have the table give a thumbs up to let you know if the correct server is serving or simply use your line-up card to also note service line up. Remember, in high school, a line-up card is used for checking players' position before

the start of each set.

Now the real challenge of the lone official is the actual rally. When working by yourself, it is important to follow the play with your eyes and be slightly ahead of the ball. Be sure to see as much play at the net as possible. Quickly, try to visually scan from top to bottom when the ball is at the net for possible touches and centerline faults. This can be challenging especially when the ball and players are moving up and off the net. Remember safety is more important than ball handling at this point. Know your limitations – the coaches and players will have to live with the reality that there is only one of you. And remember, as the only certified official on your court, you have the final say. Take a deep breath, slow down, and communicate with the coaches and players the correct applications of the rules.

So, what, when, and how does an official report an incident that occurs during a match? Visit the MHSAA web site for complete information and instructions. "It can be lonely at the top but don't worry, YOU are supported by MHSAA and NFHS and that's a sturdy stand by which to see the game".

Rules Review: The second referee is checking lineup when he/she notices that #15 is listed on the lineup, but #18 is on the court. When recognized, what are the two options that the R2 should offer the coach in this situation?

Ruling: In either case, #15 is required to take the court. The coach may leave #15 in for at least one rally and then substitute, or he/she may substitute #18 for #15 by following regular substitution procedure.