

# Punctuality!!!

*(By Jacky Loube, IAABO Executive Director)*

When the official came running through the door 10 minutes late for a game, his apologies couldn't diffuse the athletic director's incendiary rage. Hurriedly pulling off his/her coat and running onto the floor at the first dead ball exacerbated the already sensitive state of events. The official was dumbfounded and couldn't understand the curt and gruff demeanor demonstrated by game management. "I was only a few minutes late, so what's the big deal. I'll probably get a citation for parking illegally."

It is a big deal. This scenario is repeated time and time again in our business every day of the season. Rather than spend time elaborating upon the nuances of continuous motion, block/charge, and the legal jump stop, let's take a timeout to discuss a most fundamental characteristic of our trade: being perpetually punctual.

Punctuality is important in any business, it is imperative in ours. We succeed as boards and individual independent contractors based on our ability to acquire and maintain contracts. It's not just command of the rules and blowing the whistle that counts; many benefits come from punctuality especially at contract renewal time.

Referees must come to realize that lateness affects everyone in the association, not just the individual who is late. You lose no points by being on time. You do if you're late. In today's world where you stand out positively by being punctual, why would anyone choose to be late?

Good question, and a partial answer is that we are overwhelmed. Work days are busier, home hours are more concentrated; in short we have a lot more competing for our time. On the other hand, this compact list of demands doesn't diminish your responsibility to get to your game on time. Some referees, however, are not overwhelmed. They simply procrastinate unnecessarily—even when they know being tardy will create negative consequences for them and others.

What are the consequences of being late? What climate have you created? The athletic director and coach are angry and anxiety ridden, they have important tasks to perform without the added worry of looking to those steel double doors. The assignor has been called, holds the junior varsity official at the site, calls another varsity official to take your place, loses confidence in you, fines you, and finally, will think twice before putting himself/herself in this position again.

An official is late to a state tournament assignment and misses the pregame. The assignor has the alternate official participate in the pregame conference; 10 minutes before game time the official arrives. The assignor refuses to let the tardy official work the game as the

alternate has already been announced. What possibly could have been the excuse on this special day? "I got lost and didn't know where the officials were to enter the arena" or "the traffic was horrible driving to the arena this afternoon." Shame on you! Don't make excuses, it matters to be on time.

If lateness is a problem, recognize it, and work on a cure. **Plan** ahead by envisioning all the steps needed to be taken to get to the game on time. **Make written lists**, think about how to achieve being at the gym on time. **Change your focus**. If game time is 7 p.m., don't focus on 7 p.m., focus on 5:45 p.m., which is when you must leave home or place of employment to get there promptly for the pregame.

Those officials who are chronically late will focus on 7 p.m. I emphasize the nonspecific term official as a referee would appreciate the significance of punctuality as an essential component of effective game management. **Create a time cushion**. Don't craft your schedule on the best case scenario, remember Murphy's Law and give yourself time for rush hour traffic. **Learn to like being early**. By arriving at the game early you create a relaxed atmosphere for yourself and your partner(s); relieve anxiety from the events of your day, create a sounder comfort level for partner(s) you are working with for the first time.

Things do happen! Good intentions or not, sometimes you're going to be late. What do you do when Murphy's Law kicks into high gear? Promptly contact the school, apologize, briefly explain the circumstances and estimated arrival time. This sends a distinct message that your organization is a professional one and creates a friendlier mood and better feeling about the unfortunate situation. Once you have notified the venue, don't speed like a maniac and curse at every driver you pass; it's not worth the inevitable speeding ticket. You're still late! Once you get there, under severe stress, it will take you half the game to unwind. Is that fair to you, the players, the fans, the organization? A better strategy is to accept your lateness and consciously reset your arrival time. One or 2 extra minutes is not going to make the difference if you call ahead. This approach will reduce the fear of being late and the overwhelming anxiety associated with it.

The game is tough enough without putting undue pressure and stress on you. Being late is a proven way to increase that pressure and stress and make your night more difficult. Make it a habit to be punctual and the game really does seem just a little easier.