

Improper requests (and delay sanctions, in my next email) tend to cause many of us problems, regardless of experience level. I'd encourage all of us to study Rule 15.11 regarding improper requests. Here are some tips and hints to help:

#1 - An improper request is a request that doesn't follow proper procedure. A few examples:  
\* a time-out request AFTER the first referee has whistled to authorize the serve;  
\* an assistant coach or other team member (instead of the HEAD coach) making a request to the referee(s);  
\* requesting an excessive (third) time-out or substitution.

#2 - The KEY to an improper request is that the request has NOT BEEN RECOGNIZED WITH A WHISTLE. As soon as an improper request is recognized with a whistle, it becomes a delay.

#3 - Remember, an IR is an action that does NOT delay the resumption of play. As such, when an IR is assessed, it should be recorded on the scoresheet at the END Of THAT RALLY. If you try to get the scorer to record it immediately when it happens, in essence you are actually creating a delay, which is what we're trying to avoid.

#4 - Often, you can "wave off" an improper request - either through a hand gesture (sweeping motion similar to waving off a back-row attacker who is behind the attack line), or by shaking your head "no." If you're the R2, you might even verbalize this.

#5 - A junior R2 usually isn't skilled at this, so we often hear them whistling the improper request and then realizing that the team doesn't have a time-out or sub remaining. (This is a delay, see below.)

#6 - When an improper request is whistled, it MUST result in a delay sanction. EX: A coach asks for a third time-out. The R2 whistles to recognize this request, not realizing the team has already used both time-outs. In this case, a delay sanction is assessed instead of an IR.

#7 - Preventive officiating can reduce improper requests. Know how many time-outs and subs a team has used so that you can deny the request without a whistle. When a team member other than the coach or captain makes a request, it is "ignored" as an improper request. At the end of that rally, remind the coach or captain that they are the only team members who can make requests.

Hope this helps!

Brian Hemelgarn  
OVR Referees' Chair