

Referees,

As the season winds down, the intensity at matches can heat up because teams are jockeying for regional rankings in preparation for Championships in May. Also, it has been a long season, and sometimes tempers can be short, with coaches, players and spectators alike.

Regarding spectators, there have been a number of spectator issues during the past 3-4 weeks, and in some cases, the referees (YOU!) did not report this. Not every issue requires a report, but when a spectator must be removed from the facility, YOU MUST REPORT THIS!

In this regard, here are some guidelines:

1 - Sport officials, in general, are subjected to some pretty poor behavior by spectators. The OVR administration has your back!

2 - Avoid "rabbit ears." Every comment by a spectator is not worthy of a response or attention. We are concerned with the more significant issues in which a junior work team or a referee is the subject of excessive berating, yelling, vocal criticism, etc.

3 - We aren't looking for trivial issues that are quickly handled on-site by the tournament director (or a coach who quickly controls her/his parents). Spectator reactions are expected at sporting events. But it has to be within reason. Just as with the participants, we need to recognize the difference between an emotional reaction that quickly subsides VS. a conscious act of poor behavior intended to berate, belittle or challenge an official's decision.

4 - PROTECT WORK TEAMS! These kids, regardless of how well they are doing their job, don't deserve to be harassed by adults.

So with these points in mind, please be aware of spectator issues that impact your matches. Minor issues can be ignored, and this covers a significant majority of cases. DO NOT address the spectators yourselves. You must get tournament staff to assist you. In extreme cases, you may have to stop a match and send a member of the work team to bring the tournament director/staff to your court.

If a spectator must be removed from the facility, tournament staff must handle this. Remove yourself from the situation, and if necessary, go to a neutral area away from public view. Don't not engage spectators or attempt to justify/explain a call.

Lastly, significant issues, including removal of a spectator, MUST be reported using an OVR Incident Report. Do this immediately at the end of the tournament. In some cases, certain people have exhibited a pattern of poor behavior, and we need a "paper trail" to address it properly.

Thanks for all you do!

Brian Hemelgarn
OVR Referees' Chair