

Audience questions and panelist's answers from the ArbiterSports National Webinar titled: ***How sportsmanship is impacting the shortage of officials and what are some possible solutions.***



Executive Overview

On August 10th, 2022, ArbiterSports, in conjunction with *Athletic Business Magazine*, conducted a National Webinar titled: *How sportsmanship is impacting the shortage of officials and what are some possible solutions.*

Webinar registrants, totaling nearly 350 people from high school and college athletic departments, along with administrators and educators from a variety of disciplines, joined esteemed panelists in what *Athletic Business Magazine* indicated was the largest webinar, in regard to registrations, that the magazine had ever seen. This was an acute indicator of how significant the subject matters are regarding sportsmanship and the shortage of officials.

ArbiterSports, with 40 years in the business and an unparalleled commitment to research, thought leadership, and education, has taken a keen interest in providing information about these topics and will continue to explore solutions to alleviate these concerns.

The esteemed panelists for this discussion included Kevin Dustin, Salt Lake City College Director of Athletics, a State Championship High School Basketball Coach, and NJCAA Athletic Director for Championship teams in Soccer and Basketball. And Darryl Nance, renowned Master Athletic Administrator, South Carolina Basketball Coach of the Year, and NIAAA Recipient of the Award of Merit.

Although many audience questions were asked and answered during this webinar, the allotted time did not allow for all questions to be answered; consequently, the remaining unanswered questions and answers can be found in this research document.



Darryl Nance



Kevin Dustin



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QUESTION 1:

Have you found that officials, before and after a game, require escorts to and from their cars?

On occasion that has been necessary, but it is rare. Spring sports seem to be the most susceptible because the officials park close and leave the field and walk through the crowd. From time-to-time, they may require some assistance.

QUESTION 2:

The official profession is predominantly white males. How do we attract more females and what can we do to make the spaces more attractive for them?

Advertise and let women know they are needed. If all they see are white males they may not think they can officiate. And when they are ready, let them have prime games.

QUESTION 3:

The NIRSA is the organization devoted to collegiate recreation. Does anyone know if they could be a source for more officials?

We have reached out to our local colleges, but they don't have an officiating class. We recently decided to check with the Intramural Director at a college because they use students to officiate and see if they would like to get paid to at least help with our middle school sports.

QUESTION 4:

Do you think the win at all costs mentality is eroding sportsmanship?

100% it is and the "Scholarship Chase" for the parents is just as bad.



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QUESTION 5:

What have you done locally to alleviate bad sportsmanship in your arenas?

Unfortunately, we have had to remove some parents and students from coming to games, but that is a “last resort” type of thing. We try to encourage the students to have fun and support their team while leaving the opponents and officials out of it. No targeting or any chants, or cheers at anyone else. We read *The Athletes Creed* before all our games and make announcements supporting positive sportsmanship.

QUESTION 6:

Question 6: Unsportsmanlike behavior is definitely at the top of the list for the cause of the ref shortage. But I think a close second is “leadership” in the league offices. What can we do about that?

Transparency by the League offices on how officials are recruited, retained, and trained would go a long way. Also explaining or sharing the amount of time officials meet during the year, particularly out of season, to prepare would help, too.

STATEMENT:

This was an excellent webinar, probably the best I've ever seen. This is not a question, but I think ArbiterSports and Darryl and Kevin should produce a video series/presentation directed to parents since few others are doing this.

Thank you very much for your statement and a great idea! We have done presentations and written articles on Discussing Playing Time and having a Parents Practice. They were difference-makers.



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QUESTION 7:

Doesn't it make sense for colleges, community colleges and many other institutions to have a class on officiating with lessons about leadership and sportsmanship?

It does make sense and was in some curriculums years ago. We think it is time to bring it back, because you are right, it is a leadership position and when it comes to leadership, we need all the help and education we can get.

QUESTION 8:

What are your schools doing about the fans?

Many schools just ignore them when fans need to be dealt with directly. We are starting a "positive cheer competition" among our schools this year. I have a couple of people who are assisting me with watching the students and we will rate them through the year. We received this idea from some Michigan high schools. We have multiple announcements and have promoted this with ADs, Principals and our Inter-High School Council which is comprised of the 15 student body presidents, senior class presidents, and at least one other class officer. As leaders in their schools, we are asking them to help.

QUESTION 9:

With the high turnover of officials, and new ones only staying about two years, we're going to continue to have a lot of inexperienced refs. What can we do to reduce the turnover?

Address pay, safety, fan behavior and give them a reason to stay. They need to feel appreciated and welcomed at your school.

QUESTION 10:

What sport do you guys think has been impacted most by the shortage of officials and why?

In my area it has been soccer. Partially because the assigner had such a large territory to manage and everybody has all the levels of teams. Also, we have an aging official population, and since we have both boys and girls playing in the spring, and some college kids also playing in the spring who were helping with officiating, we lost a lot of help.



Educating officials about leadership and sportsmanship

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QUESTION 11:

As a hockey coach, I can tell you that Darryl is 100% spot-on. People would rather officiate a college or pro contest than a high school contest. How do we change that perception, or how do we introduce the notion of “getting your feet wet” first?

We don't know why we lose so many young officials early unless the Assigner or State Leagues are dragging their feet on getting them good games at the varsity level. Pay is an issue as well, but the states are doing the best they can. We think schools have to commit to a core belief in fan behavior and treating the opponent and officials as guests. And not to be “soft”; but, yes, we want to beat their brains out for that hour we are playing them, but when it's over its over, we shake hands graciously. Schools have to play their scheduled opponents; officials can choose not to work in some areas or mark-off schools where they don't feel welcomed or comfortable. That is clearly on the school/coach to correct.

FINAL STATEMENT FROM THE PANELISTS:

The best answer for most of these questions is...people need to be nicer and know their role. Parents need to love their kids and enjoy watching them grow and play. Coaches need to coach and love their kids and stop acting like a guy they saw on TV. Students need to cheer for their friends. Officials need to call it and move on with the game. Be decisive and keep the game going... and everybody be nicer to each other.

