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PROFESSIONALISM...IT'S TIME TO RE-OPEN THE CONVERSATION

By Nadine Crowley, Member of the CBOC

A number of incidents have occurred in the last year that highlight the need for local, provincial and national officiating associations to place a greater emphasis on professionalism. I believe that we need to start conversations around the country as to how we are going to raise our standards to enhance the credibility of officials within the membership and also in the public eye.

For years, I have witnessed or heard stories of officials participating in inappropriate and unprofessional behavior at tournaments, camps, after games, or while travelling to work a weekend series of games. Stories of excessive drinking after games or during a tournament, conflicts of interest, discrimination and harassment have been circulating for years. I am certain that, if every official sat down and thought about their career, there have been incidents that we may have observed or unfortunately experienced personally, that we did not step up and speak out about.

Webster's Dictionary defines Professionalism as: *"The conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person."* A statement that encapsulates professionalism, for me, is found in the Code of Ethics of the Alberta Basketball Officials Association and eloquently states: *"Officials who are "professionals" voluntarily observe a high level of conduct, not because of fear of penalty, but rather out of personal character. They accept responsibility for their actions. This conduct has as its foundation a deep sense*

of moral values and use of reason which substantiates the belief a given conduct is proper simply because it is.” (It should be noted that the word “official” includes active referees, supervisors, evaluators and executive association members.)

Higher Standards

As officials, we have an obligation to conduct ourselves in a professional manner, both on and off the court. Why is this important? The nature of what we do, namely to administer the rules and manage the game of basketball, requires that we be seen as fair, proper, impartial, and acting in an almost unimpeachable manner. As officials, we project a certain image to the public. We are scrutinized both on and off the court. When in the grocery store, the bank, the bar or a restaurant, they know who we are. Accordingly, we have a responsibility to protect the image of an official by projecting one of professionalism at all times, because it impacts the way in which people see every official.

Every year my local Board presents a session on professionalism, focusing on issues such as: conducting oneself appropriately as a representative of the sport and the Board, arriving on time (or early) for assignments, dressing appropriately, accepting your assignments in a timely manner, continuously seeking to improve your officiating skills, demonstrate values of fairness, neutrality, respect, and discretion. There has also been an emphasis on ensuring that we treat players, coaches, fans and other officials in a courteous and respectful manner and that we put our best effort forward during each and every game that we work; the newest addition is a warning as to how officials use Social Media. As officials, we are expected to uphold these values and to follow the guidelines as set out by our Associations. However, even though standards of conduct and professionalism are reviewed annually, there continues to be incidents amongst officials, players, coaches, fans and between officials that have to be addressed by our Executive.

The Treatment of Officials by Officials

One of the components of professionalism we often neglect to talk about, is how we treat each other as officials. The Alberta Basketball Officials Association has a clause in their Code of Ethics (Revised 2011) which states that officials *“...are obligated to treat other officials with professional dignity and courtesy and recognize that it is inappropriate to criticize other officials publicly, including but not limited to, criticizing or attempting to explain another official’s judgment or decisions.”* By-Law 7 in the OABO Constitution clearly communicates the General Conduct expected of officials in its Code of Conduct by stating: *“OABO members and representatives are expected to uphold the highest standard of ethical behavior and personal conduct at all times and are responsible for conducting themselves in such a way as to represent the OABO in the most favourable light at all times.”* It is this area of official to official professionalism that I believe needs to be highlighted and discussed. To preserve the integrity of officiating, we need to adhere to a code of conduct for officials that covers incidents both on and off the court. There are times when officials act inappropriately off the court. Therefore, the standard of conduct needs to be communicated clearly as well as the consequences of their actions. One such incident occurred this

season between officials. The incident occurred off the court in a social setting. This incident fits the description outlined in the OABO Constitution of Sexual Harassment. Under By-Law 7 I ii), sexual harassment is defined as follows: *“A person is deemed to have sexually harassed another person (the person harassed) if:*

- a) the person makes an unwelcome sexual advance, or an unwelcome request for sexual favours, to the person harassed; or*
- b) the person engages in unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the person harassed.*

“Conduct of a sexual nature” includes making a statement of a sexual nature to a person or in the presence of a person.” (pg. 16-17)

In the situation in question, the Complainant filed a report and the Respondent was suspended and required to make amends in other forms, before being cleared to return to the court. What happened next also needs to be addressed when dealing with professionalism and credibility to our profession. Upon return to the court, the Respondent was eventually rewarded with a National Assignment. Receiving a national appointment is recognition for outstanding contribution to officiating during the season and is one of the highest honours a Canadian official can receive. How could this have happened? The awarding of this appointment illustrates that the gravity of these incidents is not fully understood, not only in regards to its impact on the complainant, but also on the officiating community as a whole. To me, this error in judgment does not set a good example of professionalism within our sport. If we return to the related concepts of professionalism, we see the words respect, integrity and discretion. None of these concepts seems to have been applied to this situation.

I believe that, the higher the level of official, the higher the expectations should be on that group to uphold the ethical standards and values of the profession. Referees who hold those few coveted positions in the upper echelons of officiating, should be held to a higher standard. The people at the top have to lead by example. Our leaders should reflect these values and demonstrate the integrity and leadership skills that we can all learn from, and on whom we can rely to make the right decisions to honour our trade and the membership as a whole. If our leaders are not conveying the values and morals we want all officials to abide by, then how can we expect others to?

Retention of Officials

The culmination of such incidents and lack of appropriate consequences have led to discontent among many in our community. I have spoken to new and veteran officials who are questioning their continued membership, due to the seriousness and prevalence of these incidents. Many are disillusioned and dispirited by the lack of respect among officials at every level, and the tainting of the image, morals and values of the profession. Has this issue contributed to our inability to retain officials? If we want to uphold our credibility as professionals and retain our members, we must set standards of conduct and guide ourselves accordingly by ensuring that we are all held accountable for our conduct. We need to feel safe calling out others for their bad behavior, otherwise it simply

allows it to continue. However, most officials are fearful to speak up for fear of compromising their future opportunities.

The Officials Code of Ethics

In my professional career as a Registered Social Worker, our College is governed by a Code of Ethics. To be deemed a Member in Good Standing, every year, upon renewal of our professional designation, we are obligated to check a box stating that we have read the Code of Ethics and we agree to adhere to every one of its elements. I realize that we do not belong to a professional college, but it is implied that we are professionals who work in the community and in the public eye. Should we not be held to a certain standard or code of conduct?

Having a Code of Ethics makes us accountable to those we serve. It makes officials at all levels accountable for their behaviour. It elevates our profession by providing clear expectations, consistency and a higher standard of behavior which will hopefully improve the image of officials in the eyes of the public. It was evident, upon researching this issue, that most Code of Ethics or Codes of Conduct are buried somewhere in the Constitutions of local and provincial associations. I think it is safe to say that most officials do not read the Constitution, unless they are on the Executive, a Constitutional Committee or are searching for something in particular. Only the Alberta Basketball Officials Association has a tab on their homepage providing officials with easy access to their Code of Ethics. I would suggest that all Associations follow this lead, ensuring that it is highlighted in a place of importance and easily accessible to the officials. Further, I would suggest that all officials should sign a Code of Conduct prior to every season to be deemed a Member in Good Standing.

Continuing Education

When behavior around us is unbecoming, we should be dealing with and eliminating it from our profession, instead of shielding it or covering it up. We need to be unafraid to speak up when we witness inappropriate or unbecoming behavior. We need to be able to stand up for our value system, even when it does not directly affect us, because, at some point, it will touch each of us. Therefore, I challenge those to use their disappointment and frustration to make our profession stronger by speaking out and educating others. Educating our community about the expectations of an official, appropriate conduct and the impact of misbehavior on our entire community will help to enhance the level of ethical credibility among officials and the public.

Let's start the conversation by focusing on treating each other with more respect, courtesy and dignity and work together to create a safe and supportive environment for all officials. We need to establish and promote a code of ethics that we all believe in, and which allows us to reach that higher standard that we are all capable of.

MY FIBA JOURNEY

By Maripier Malo, Montreal, QC

As far as I can remember, I always had a great interest for the referee's whistle. I was 17 and I remember contacting the association to have more information on how to become a basketball referee. It is only after my cegep and NCAA playing career that I took part in the officiating course. Since my first whistle, I have been in love with officiating. I could never think that my whistle would help me shape my personality, build friendships for a lifetime and travel the world. What a privilege!

Since my beginnings, I have wanted to improve and learn from the best. This is why I attended many officiating camps, such as the CPA Camp, CABO camp (twice), Canada West Camp (twice), Atlantic 10 NCAA camp, etc. I always have my little notebook to make sure I write down all the feedbacks received. One of the greatest feedback received was from Steven Seibel at the CABO camp : «Do everything crisp!». Still today, I continue to write every feedback and any special situations that happen in my games.

In September 2011, I had the honor and pleasure to be invited to the «Referees camp for women – FIBA Americas» in Colombia, South America. This camp was to identify female referees with potential to obtain their FIBA card, and also to recertify FIBA candidates. During the four-day camp, we had many presentations and mechanics sessions on the floor. Then, we ran the beep test, completed a written rule test, and officiated many games with supervision. It was such a rich experience as a referee, but most importantly as a person. I was fortunate to discover a new region of the world, learn about another culture, and meet amazing female referees from all over America. Soon after the camp, I was very excited to learn that FIBA America was recommending me to obtain my FIBA card! Then, in 2012, I recertified in Montreal with all the FIBA carded officials from Canada.

My FIBA adventure took off in the summer of 2012 with my first international assignment in Puerto Rico, for the U18 Women's Americas Championship. An experience of a lifetime!

Since then, I have had the chance to be selected to referee at:

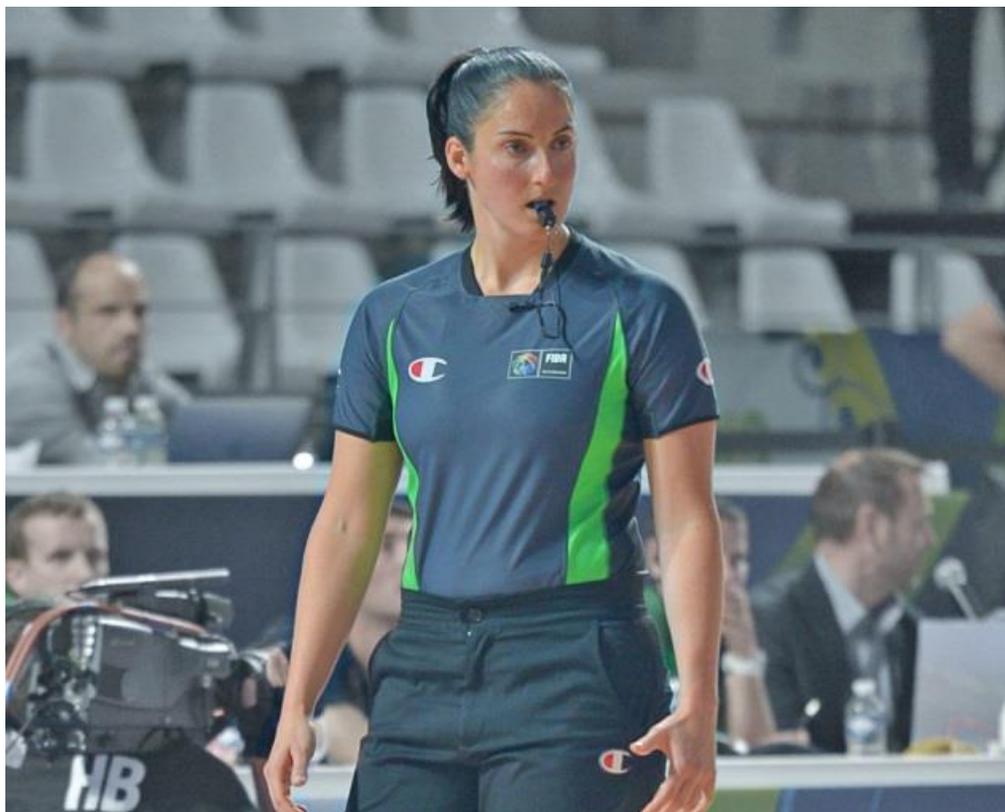
- ✓ World Championship U19 for women (Lithuania) – July 2013
- ✓ World Championship U17 for women (Czech republic) – June 2014
- ✓ CentroBasket Championship (Monterrey, Mexico) – July 2014
- ✓ World Championship U19 for women (Russia) – July 2015
- ✓ FIBA AMERICAS – Americas Olympic Qualifier (Edmonton, CANADA) – August 2015
- ✓ FIBA AFRICA – Africa Olympic Qualifier – (Yaoundé, CAMEROUN) – September 2015
- ✓ OLYMPIC TESTING EVENT – (RIO de Janeiro, Brazil) –January 2016
- ✓ FIBA –Olympic Qualifier - (Nantes, France) – June 2016

Every time I have the honor to step on the floor at these championships, I try to implement all the great feedbacks received, such as :

- revise all the FIBA rules and mechanics

- **be physically prepared**
- **watch most games of the Championship**
- **scout and analyse the participating teams**
- **learn and listen to the veteran officials**
- **listen and ask questions**
- **be open to all feedback from the supervisors and try to implement them quickly on the floor**
- **communicate proactively on and off the floor with fellow officials**
- **analyse video sequences of the games**
- **take note of all the feedbacks received**
- **be professional, focused, full of energy and positive at all times**
- **cherish these amazing experiences to the fullest**

I'm tremendously grateful for these incredible opportunities since the beginning of my FIBA adventure. They would not have been possible without the support of all the people (colleagues, mentors, parents, friends, etc.) who believe in me, and continue helping me along the way. Thank you so much ! All the best, and see you on the court !



ARE WE ON THE SAME PAGE?

By Jamey Jennings, Supervisor of Newfoundland

Over the course of a basketball season, we get to work games with various partners in our local boards. If we are good enough and please our local supervisor, we may get selected for a provincial championship in various categories. Those attempting to move up the ladder, so to speak, will work hard and may be rewarded with CB National Championship appointments during the summer, or even given an opportunity to work small college or U Sport Conference play. In any event, each official should ask him/herself: “When I am on the floor, are we as a crew (either 2 persons or 3 persons) on the same page?”

In the course over my 40 + years on the floor and as an evaluator, I have seen many styles and personalities of officials, in my own province and across the country. It certainly doesn't help the image of officiating at any level, if part of the crew has his/her head in the stands trying to gain favour with someone they know is there to watch. As well, it doesn't help the crew, if the official or officials are schmoozing with the coaches. The image of us as officials becomes tarnished to a certain degree.

Once the ball is tossed, you and your partner need to be on the same page for 40 minutes. To ensure that happens, a good pre-game conference is a necessity. That means utilizing the same standard set of mechanics, hustling for 40 minutes, calling the game the same way, interacting efficiently with the table crew, the players and the coaches. If one official is doing his/her job, and the other or others are “passengers or tourists” for the next 1.5 hours, a problem will occur very quickly. That does not mean that you cannot smile or have positive interactions with the participants – that's the human side of officiating! Officials need to remember that they are being paid to provide a professional service, and whoever is paying for the service will want the game to be officiated to the best of the crew's abilities, no matter what the level of basketball.

It's February, and according to the Weather Guru in Newfoundland, Ryan Snoddon of CBC, the worst of winter is behind us, as the days are getting longer and winter is slowly moving out. However, in the dog days of February leading into the provincial championships in each province and the CCAA and U Sport Championships in March, games are getting more intense and we need to ensure that we are prepared each and every night as a crew. In essence, do all that you can to make sure you are on the same page.