

Below are excerpts from an article by Dave Sabaini, which appeared in Referee Magazine. They provide excellent guidelines for completing an ejection report. In short the very best advice provided in this article is “Just state the facts, don’t editorialize.” This should be helpful for all officials.

Just The Facts

The Dos and Don’ts of Writing Reports

It was a tough game. The conference championship was on the line and the home team’s coach took issue with a call that was quick, tough and went against the home team.

In the ensuing “discussion” the coach used a descriptor of the official that brought the official’s lineage into question, and the official had no choice but to eject the coach. Of course the game went downhill from there.

Sitting at home in the quiet a few hours later, the official stared at his glowing computer screen and wondered which keys to strike. On the screen was an “incident report form” from the state association website. While his anger had subsided somewhat, he knew the coach was in the wrong and deserved the ejection. But what he was about to put on the report could make the incident last into next season for the coach, and well beyond that for himself.

It is one of the most distasteful duties any official is required to perform: the post-ejection or “Incident Report” that must be filed by the official with the state or conference office virtually immediately after the game. It is in your best interest to learn the “dos and don’ts” of writing those touchy documents to avoid adding unnecessary fuel to the fire.

Stick to the Facts

You may be tempted to embellish the truth, especially when the coach has touched one of your “hot” buttons. Such embellishment may be anything from merely your opinion of the situation to an outright lie. There is nothing to be gained and much to be lost. *Don’t!*

“It is much easier for us to defend what the official did if we have just the facts,” said Gary Whelchel, state commissioner of officials for the Arizona Interscholastic Association. “In fact, not getting enough factual information on incident reports is the number-one problem we face in the process; and defending the actions of the officials is what that’s all about.”

Sometimes officials concentrate so thoroughly on the game that some specifics of the incidents are lost before they step back into the locker room. If you have a situation that requires you to write an incident report, take a few moments immediately after the situation has been

brought under control -and *before* play resumes- to jot down the important facts: the name(s) and number(s) of the offender(s), the game situation (period, inning, time) and *exactly* what precipitated the ejection or incident.

Just write the facts on your report. Keep everything to yourself.

Be Concise

If you had an ejection in the seventh inning, we probably don't need to know that the coach "came out" on you in the second; especially if the earlier incident didn't result in a warning or other official reprimand.

Also avoid pointing out additional "minor" infractions if, again, they had nothing to do with the incident at hand. Pointing out in your report that the player's uniform wasn't 100% legal (although that had nothing to do with the ejection) is simply "piling on," and those kinds of unnecessary details make it look as if your ejection was "soft" and that you didn't have much of a case in the first place.

Incident reports should be written in such a way that "someone reading it, who wasn't at the game, would know what went on," said Steve Ellinger, executive director of the Texas Association of Sports Officials.

What you want to avoid is writing down *everything* the coach or player did leading up to the ejection. "It's just like when you have a coach who, from the minute you toss the ball up is whining," says Ellinger. "You don't know what to listen to- you just tune him out. It's the same way with incident reports [that contain too much information]."

Be Timely

While you should *never* write an incident report in the heat of anger, waiting and taking a few days won't do it either.

Undoubtedly, your supervisor wants that report in his hand *before* his or her phone starts ringing the next day. Rest assured that supervisor will certainly be getting the other side of the story soon enough, so make sure yours arrives *first*.

More importantly, most administrative organizations have set deadlines by which must be filed so that schools, conferences or teams may take appropriate corrective action against the offending coach or player.

Don't Opinionate

The reports don't exist for you to vent, second-guess or worse, "get even." Your supervisor along with the coach's or player's "boss" will handle that aspect of the event. You are already squarely in the middle of the event-don't paint a target on yourself. Even if someone asks your opinion on the "proper punishment" for the offending individual, *stay out of it!*

Use Your "Friends"

There are two types of "friends" who can be extremely helpful when the time comes to file an incident report: spell check and a spouse or friend.

Use spell check to catch any spelling or punctuation errors that may be present. "Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation are very important," says Jim Jorgensen, a long time assigner from California and a former NASO board member. "Remember, school officials and educators will be reading those. Poorly written reports reflect badly on the official."

Ask your friend or spouse to review your incident report for clarity before clicking "submit." If they are confused, your supervisor likely will be, too.

Get Your Ducks in a Row

Make sure you confer with your partners before you submit the report.

It is essential that you are on the same page as your partners. Nothing would be worse than a supervisor checking with your partners after a report is filed and finding out that their version of the events differs from yours. It's better to swallow a little humble pie *before* writing your report than after the fact.

Follow Directions

Be sure to file your report within the time frame specified by your association, assigner or league. Late reports put everyone in a bad situation.

If your governing body wants the report filed via the web by noon the following day, do it. If they want it written in crayon on red construction paper, get it done. This is not the time to debate how the system functions or who it favors. Don't make a bad situation worse by not following protocol to the letter.

Incident reports are a necessary evil. Look at your annual visit to your doctor; nobody wants to do it, but everybody knows it's the right thing to do. And in the end, the slight temporary pain can save you a bigger, more prolonged pain later.

Learn What Not To Write

“In my 27 years of officiating it’s the worst behavior I have ever witnessed.”

Making such a qualified statement only opens the door for questioning. Believe it or not, you don’t need such impact to bring validity to the ejection.

“The coach had it coming.”

Had it coming and why? If multiple incidents led to the ejection, deal with each in detail. If not, leave them out of the report.

“Red 23 offered a rather unflattering remark about me, I was not amused.”

What was the remark? Hair color? Eye color? No personal observations need to be added. If you issued a technical foul or ejection for the remark, state exactly what was said.