

When I work a game my first thought is to do everything I can to make myself comfortable on the court. This starts a couple days in advance, communicating with your partners and the school about the upcoming game, making sure everyone is aware of the date, time and location so there are no surprises on game night. There is no worse feeling than sitting there in that locker room staring at the door waiting for someone to show. Get your partners' phone numbers in your cell phone so if there is any delay you can alert them.

I like to get to the game site early. I try to arrive no later than the end of the first quarter of the JV game so I can find the game manager and get in the locker room before the JV game goes to half time. I don't want to disrupt the officials working the JV game by arriving during their half time and taking their minds off of their game. I like to watch them work and be in the locker room at half time but I NEVER offer advice or critique them. It's my opinion that officials need to stay focused on the task at hand and filling their heads with outside thoughts can be distracting. If they ask for help, keep it short and simple.

While watching the first half I try to "read the room". I check to see if there are coaching boxes, what type of score table we have, are there any obstructions to deal with, what hangs over the baskets and any safety issues to keep in mind. Putting myself in that atmosphere and feeling comfortable with my surroundings when I walk on the court puts me in the right frame of mind to work a game.

Once the officials for the JV game leave the locker room for their second half I like to stay in and start getting ready for my game. A good, solid pregame goes a long way toward getting me and my partners on the same page for the game. Each game offers a unique set of challenges and the more we can talk about the game in the locker room then the more comfortable we feel with each other on the floor. It's difficult to feel comfortable with new partners but it can be dangerous to feel too comfortable working with people you know well. Even if it's not a "big" game, treat it as such because the players will still come with intensity and you have to meet that as an official, remember that record and ability don't have any bearing on how much the game means to the players. A good pregame has never made anyone a worse official so what's the harm? I make sure that when I am the R I have a good conversation with the scorer and timer so we are all working together....they are officials too!

During the game I try and communicate with my partners as much as possible. Sound mechanics are a must! When I make a call my partners need to know what I have and they aren't watching me work so the better and sharper my mechanics are the easier it is on my partners. Anything I can do to communicate with my partners during the game helps. It may be a gesture or a nod or thumbs up but I want my partners to know that I am into the game. You really don't have a lot of conversation time during the game so the little things mean a lot. It gives me confidence when I make a big call and my partners give me a quick nod of approval and we look good as a crew when our mechanics are sharp and consistent. I try to make sure I always know time, score, situation....know the foul count, know the time out situation, know the time on the clock and make sure it's running and stopping as needed. Anticipate crucial situations such as last second time outs and communicate necessary information with my partners. The best way to handle correctible errors is to not make them. If it's a close game, get with the scorer and make sure the score is right before it's too late. It never hurts to double check.

After the game, get in the locker room and let things wind down. Don't take the intensity of the game into the locker room with you. Let things cool off and then discuss things that need discussing. Take criticism as an invite to get better. Be a sponge, you never know where help may come from. If you have the chance, get on the phone, go to the bar, wind down with other officials and hear their stories. Issues that officials had in one game can help you out later on, plus you have the chance to socialize with people you may be working with down the road.

BE CONFIDENT....IF YOU WEREN'T READY FOR THIS GAME, YOUR ASSIGNOR WOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN IT TO YOU!