

COMING INTO FOCUS

Staying in the Moment During Long Matches



During long matches, it is important to focus on every point to stay in the moment. Alonzo Windley, New Bern, N.C., focuses intently on every play in order to get the call right.

By Brett Myres

Staying focused as a referee or line judge is of the utmost importance. Whether it's a tight match or not, first point or last, long rally or quick kill, you need to be on your "A" game. When rallies and matches get long, it can sometimes be difficult to keep your concentration at the level it needs to be. Use these simple tips to help keep your mind and body ready for each point of the match.

Before the Rally

As a referee, keep focused on your routine. As an R1, the routine might be to scan the benches, scan the players on the court, scan the work crew and then one final scan to check if the setters are in the front row or back row. Then begin the point. When you start to go away from your routine, the mind starts to wander and then you are playing "catch up" the entire play. And that's when you start to miss things.

As a line judge, make sure you're holding your flag in a ready position without gripping too tightly. Center yourself behind your corner, take a few deep breaths and relax your shoulders. Reset your mind, clearing it from whatever happened in the previous point, good or bad, and locate your server.

During the Rally

As a referee, staying focused during long rallies can be tough. The longer the play goes, the more quick decisions you may have to make. You may also find talking to yourself helps keep the focus during the point, and that's OK. You might be talking in your head or saying things out loud when using headsets. It will keep you focused just by saying touch, confirming a good back-row attack or counting out the contacts on a crazy play. Even reminding yourself if the setter is in the front

row or back row during the play will keep you focused and keep you from making the wrong decision during an exciting rally or close set. The last thing you want to do is worry if you made the right call (or no call). Even if something didn't go right earlier in the set, you cannot think about it during the rally — keep your mind focused on the present.

As a line judge, you should be in your ready stance before the serve is contacted — flag parallel to the floor, knees maybe slightly bent, depending on whether the serve is on your side or the other, and eyes either on the line or the server. Staying in that ready stance is important as the point continues because you may need to move quickly to see a pancake or tip, to get a better view of the antenna or to get out of the way of a player. You may also need to get your body in a better position to see the hitter and blocker's hands, depending on where the hit is coming from.

It is easier to move and see when your body is ready, and much harder to quickly get in position when you're standing straight up. During long rallies, it might also be beneficial to talk through things in your head as you see them. Cue words like out, back, up, hands, touch or tip might help you keep a mini dialogue of what's going on and help you stay focused through those long points.

After the Rally

As a referee, take a breath, relax your shoulders and begin your routine. Even though the point is over, you still need to maintain your focus. Don't forget to scan the benches and check for subs or coaches that may need your attention. Shift your weight, relax your knees and reset to get ready for the next point.

As a line judge, it's important to take a moment after each point to relax your mind and body. You just spent the previous moments with your body and mind working their hardest. While you don't want to make any huge movements, especially with your flag, it's OK to

move around a little while you relax and reset. Take a small step back from your corner, re-adjust your feet, relax your neck, shoulders and arms, and breathe. It's important not to look too stiff between points and a simple relaxation routine will help with that.

Between Sets

As a referee, stay hydrated. If you are the R1, it's OK to have one of your partners get you some water during a timeout or between sets. Don't try to work your way through it. Take the time between sets and during timeouts to re-energize.

As a line judge, this is truly your time to recharge. Sit, put your flag down, get a drink and refocus. Even though your time is short, a couple minutes can really do the trick. Take a moment to reflect on the previous set. Is there anything you need to discuss with your partner? Is there a technique you need to tweak or a situation that you want to review? There's not much time, so this is only for quick topics. Further details can be discussed in the postgame debrief.

Staying focused during each rally should be a high priority for each official. No matter who is playing, where you're officiating or the level of play, you need to be able to maintain your concentration. Whether you create an established routine between each point, or you just remind yourself to breathe, use these tips to help you achieve success.

Brett Myres, Indianola, Iowa, is an NCAA and USA National official. He referees in the Big Ten, Big East and Missouri Valley conferences and the Summit League. He has been a referee for the NCAA Division I tournament in 2018 and 2019 and the National Invitational Volleyball Championship match in 2019.

Sarah Myres also contributed to this article. She is an NCAA line judge from Indianola, Iowa. She works in the Big Ten, Big 12 and Missouri Valley conferences and has been a line judge for the NCAA Division I tournament since 2016. □

QUICKTIP

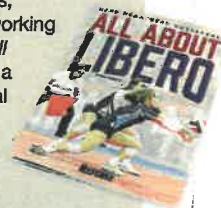
Prior to getting on the referee stand for your match, **check and double check to ensure the ladder and all bolts/screws are in place and securely tightened.** Referees should do an initial check of the ladder when they first arrive at the facility. A second check should take place prior to going up to start the match and should be repeated each time you climb the ladder. It's possible for the stand to have shifted during play. If this happens, come down off the stand and make sure the stand is secure before returning.

TOOLS

All About Libero

Are you struggling to keep the rules straight regarding the libero position? While the position has been around for more than two decades, it still causes a lot of confusion with officials, especially if you are working multiple codes. The *All About Libero* guide is a must-have educational piece for your officiating library. The 32-page book is filled with PlayPics, color photos and all the rules you need to know regarding the libero across NFHS, NCAA and USAV rule codes. The book also contains caseplays and a quiz to help you prepare and get the calls right.

The book is available for \$11.95 and is available at store.referee.com/volleyball.



THEY SAID IT

"I think it's pretty intimidating to people. ... So many people want to point out the things you do wrong or say wrong. We have high-speed cameras people can use to prove that you're wrong, and that's a pretty humbling experience."

— 2021 NCAA Championship line judge Ben Goodwin, 27, on the difficulty of recruiting new members to officiate volleyball

SOURCE: THE SPOKESMAN REVIEW



TEST YOURSELF

In each of the following, you are given a situation and possible answer(s). You are to decide which answer(s) are correct for NFHS, NCAA or USAV rules, which might vary. **Solutions: p. 81.**

- A ball in the plane of the net is contacted simultaneously by A4 and B5, both front-row players. The ball falls out of bounds on team A's side of the net.
 - Team A wins the rally.
 - Team B wins the rally.
 - Replay the rally.
- What is the default length of timeouts?
 - 30 seconds.
 - 60 seconds.
 - 75 seconds.
 - 90 seconds.
- (NFHS and NCAA only) If an intermission is used between the second and third sets, what is the maximum duration of the intermission?
 - Three minutes.
 - Five minutes.
 - Seven minutes.
 - 10 minutes.
- In which of the following cases is it illegal to reach beyond the net to block a ball?
 - The ball is falling near the net and no member of the attacking team can make a legal play on the ball.
 - The block contact occurs simultaneously with the attack hit.
 - The opponents have completed their three team hits.
 - It is never legal to reach across the net and block a ball that is completely located on the opponent's side of the court.
- While in the front zone, team A's libero contacts the ball using an overhead finger pass (setting action). A6, a back-row player, who is completely behind the attack line, contacts the ball while the ball is completely above the top of the net. The ball lands in the opponent's court.
 - Loss of rally/point to team A.
 - Loss of rally/point to team B.
 - Replay.

Stay in the Box

By Robert Doan

If you watch a handful of volleyball matches, you will notice not all coaches move or coach the same. Coaches often sit, stand, pace or even kneel during a match. Due to the variety of coaching positions, officials should know where coaches are allowed and not allowed to be during a match. This article will cover the "coaches box."

To start, let's review the rules regarding coach's location during play.

In NFHS, the head coach may stand to coach in the libero replacement zone, at least six feet from the sideline, as shown in the PlayPic. If a team member on the bench is assessed a red card for unsporting conduct, this privilege is lost for the match. Assistant coaches shall remain seated on the bench, except to ask the second referee, during a dead-ball situation, to review the accuracy of the score; verify the number of timeouts used; request the serving order of their team; verify the proper server of the opponent; stand at the bench to greet a replaced player; confer with players during timeouts; spontaneously react to an outstanding play by a player(s)

of their own team; or attend to an injured player with permission of a referee (12-2-5, 12-2-6).

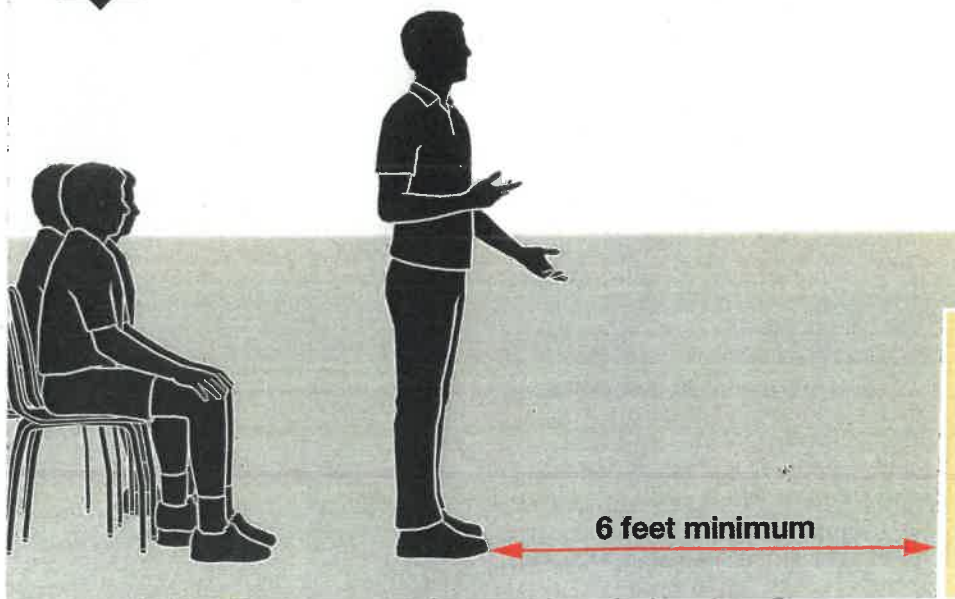
In NCAA, non-playing team members are required to stay at least 1.75 meters from the court and completely outside the substitution zone (5.2.4.1).

In USA Volleyball, the coach may stand or walk within the free zone in front of team bench from the extension of the attack line up to and including the warmup area, no closer to the court than 1.75 meters from the sideline and its extension, without disrupting or delaying the match. One assistant coach at a time may stand to instruct players on the court, with the same location restrictions (5.2.3.4).

Let's take a look at some common scenarios related to coach's location during play and between plays.

Coach too close to sideline. For referees who are also certified line judges, this is a common problem they encounter as a line judge. It is important to make sure coaches are the required length away from the sideline for both the safety of the players and to provide the best visual opportunity for the line judge to see the sideline all the way across the court. Coaches unintentionally

PlayPic®



inch closer to the court as they are invested in the match. This is similar to the way fans creep to the ends of their seats during an exciting match. It is the job of the referees to remind coaches when they are getting too close to the line. Often it is much easier to remind coaches as an R2 than an R1, but either way the referee team needs to make sure the intent of the rule is enforced.

Too many coaches standing or addressing the referee. It is important to know the rules regarding which coaches are allowed to stand and address the referee. In NFHS matches, only the head coach is allowed to stand during play.

In NCAA, there is no restriction to the number of coaches allowed to stand, as long as they abide by the 1.75-meter rule.

In USA Volleyball, the head coach and one assistant coach can stand. Because coaches often work at different levels of volleyball, which may have different rules, they need a friendly reminder of who can and cannot stand during the match. This is similar to discussing plays with the referee. In high school and club volleyball, assistant coaches are only allowed to coach players and are prohibited from discussing decisions with the referees. In NCAA, only one coach, either the head coach or assistant coach, is allowed to address a referee on any given play.

Coach standing just outside the 10-foot line. This is a legal position for coaches, as long as they are the correct distance from the sideline. More and more teams place an assistant or head coach at this position during the match. Coaches often stand in this position for many reasons. It might be to see the other team's positions or plays differently or to communicate with their own players more efficiently. The first couple of times working as an R2 with a coach in this position can be a little awkward. It can feel as though they are in your space, but as long as they are not in the substitution zone, they are in a legal position. If the coach is in this position to try to influence the R2, the official needs to address the coach's position. Officials

COURTESY OF STEVE THORPE

5 MINUTES WITH STEVE THORPE

NCAA coordinator of officials for women's volleyball discusses the 2021 Championship in a bubble in Omaha, Neb.

Residence: Doylestown, Pa.

Experience: Currently the NCAA coordinator of officials for women's volleyball. Began officiating NCAA volleyball in 1985 and was selected to work six NCAA Division I Women's Volleyball Championships. Inducted into the Professional Association of Volleyball Officials Hall of Fame in 2013. Served as the USA Volleyball rules interpreter from 2000-13 and refereed on the international level from 2001-14.

REFEREE: Overall, how did you feel about this year's championship?

THORPE: I wouldn't have missed it for the world and I hope we never have to do (the bubble) again. I am sure I am not the only national coordinator with that feeling in all the sports as they go through their championships. Overall, I think it went outstanding. If you can get 48 of the best NCAA teams in the country and a group of 60 of the best officials in one area, one facility, for about a six- or seven-day event, we'd sign up for that every year, but not under these conditions.

REFEREE: How was the assigning process different this year?

THORPE: Usually, you go to a first/second round site and everyone works the first round, and then half the people work the second round because there's only one match instead of two. In this case, there were 16 matches round one, there were 16 matches round two. So, everybody was going to work the first and second round. It was fantastic from an assigning point of view in that we had lots of choices in that if something didn't go so well on one court with one team, that official didn't have to see that team the next day at all. But I also likened it to the Cheesecake Factory menu; you got way too many choices perhaps.

REFEREE: The R2 had to go to the opposite side of the court for reviews. Were there any challenges with that?

THORPE: Virtually to a person, this was not the first time they had to do that this season. It took a little time. Everybody had headsets here. What that did enable you to do was to talk to your partner a little bit on the way over and then also talk to them on the way back telling them the result of the play.

REFEREE: The night before the championship match, you have the semifinal officials gather to discuss plays from their matches. What does

that experience allow you to do?

THORPE: With the advent of video and in our training sessions pre-season, there is a request for more and more video because there are so many different situations. It's like any sport, you can talk about what the rule is and you can talk about a situation, but then a unique situation presents itself in the application of a certain rule and the video evidence is a great teaching tool. We found that better and more video in the teaching aspect is vital. The crews will tell you they are more nervous going into that than into their matches. It's great for the general cadre to see even officials at this level are human. That's also a time when we usually announce the final crew for the next night. It is the worst-kept secret in volleyball by that point, but that's when we recognize the crew and make kind of a little, big deal about who is going to be refereeing the final match.

REFEREE: What stands out from this year that sums up 2020-21?

THORPE: In the Finals review, normally we have the crew all together. At first, I said everybody get on your own computers, your own room. Although there was not a crew chief, Devonie McLarty, who ended up being the first referee on the final, she would be the one who would get a sense of the crew and she'd be honest with me. She said, "This crew was special and we really bonded well, and we'd like to be in the same room as we do the semifinal analysis." They had the same setup like they would at a normal convention. That was something that showed what teamwork was. That stuck out in my mind. During play, I'd say for me, and I didn't expect any different, the happiness that it seemed like the players were experiencing just being able to play.



CASEPLAYS

Player's Foot on Sideline

Play: At the moment the ball is contacted for serve, a player on the receiving team has her left foot touching the sideline with half her foot touching the floor beyond the sideline. **Ruling:** In all codes, the player is not in legal position. The result is a position fault and a loss of rally/point awarded to the serving team. The foot may be in contact with the sideline, but no portion of the foot may be touching the floor beyond the sideline (NFHS 6-4-3a; NCAA 10.3.1; USAV 7.4).

Spontaneous Action

Play: After an exciting rally, team B's substitutes jump to their feet, run toward the sideline to celebrate the point and cheer for their team. They quickly return to their team bench (or warmup area/ NCAA, USAV) without delaying the start of the next rally. **Ruling:** Legal. Substitutes may spontaneously react to an exciting play, provided the reaction does not delay the next rally or the conduct isn't deemed disruptive or unsporting. If those actions delay the next rally, a delay sanction/unnecessary delay may be assessed at the referees' discretion. If those actions are unsporting or are intended to taunt the opponent, a conduct sanction may be assessed to the individual(s) at fault or to the coach (NFHS 12-2-7a, 12-2-8; NCAA 6.1.2.1, 6.1.3, 6.3.2.8; USAV 4.2.1, 21.1, 21.2).

Divider Net

Play: A divider net extends from the ceiling to the floor and is located about 10 feet from the court. Team A's errant pass sends the ball directly toward the divider net. A9 runs to save the ball and just before A9 plays the ball, A11 pushes the divider net backward to allow A9 to play the ball. A9 directs the ball back toward the court. **Ruling:** At the moment A11 contacts the divider net to allow A9 to play the ball, the first referee should whistle to end the rally and signal the ball out of bounds. In NFHS, a player may not contact any floor obstacle to gain an advantage (2-4-1b). In NCAA and USAV, only the player making an attempt to play the ball may go into the partition to move it. When a teammate moves a divider net, the ball is ruled out of play (NCAA 4.2.2; USAV 9a).

must not assume a coach is trying to influence the R2 simply because that coach chose to stand just outside the 10-foot line. Address the issue only if needed.

A coach enters the substitution zone. In the heat of the moment, a coach may enter the substitution zone during play, or more than likely between plays, to get the attention of the referee. A simple mistake of stepping into the zone to signal a substitution or timeout can be quickly forgiven. When a coach enters the substitution zone to argue a call or to correct the scorer, this is when referees need to act quickly to move the coach back to the coaching box. Walk the coach back to the coaching box, explain any decision or ruling that was made and remind the coach to stay out of the substitution zone and in the coaching box.

What to do if a coach violates one of the rules? With everything discussed in this article, a verbal warning is more than likely the first line of defense when a coach breaks one of the rules. In most cases,

coaches are not trying to break the rules but violate the rules in the excitement of the match. If the coach has been warned several times in the match, the use of unnecessary delay/delay sanctions are appropriate. If the coach enters the substitution area to argue a call or to correct an error at the scorers' table, an individual sanction might be used.

Some coaches enjoy the best seat in the house and do not move from it. The majority of coaches move all throughout the coach's box during the match. At times, coaches move into restricted areas. It is important as referees to understand it might be unintentional and coaches might need a gentle reminder. However, although the infraction may be unintentional, referees need to enforce the rules related to where coaches are allowed to work to make sure the match is officiated fairly, and all the participants are safe.

Robert Doan, PhD, has been a high school, college and USAV official for more than a decade. He is a resident of Charleston County, S.C. □

Hail the Host

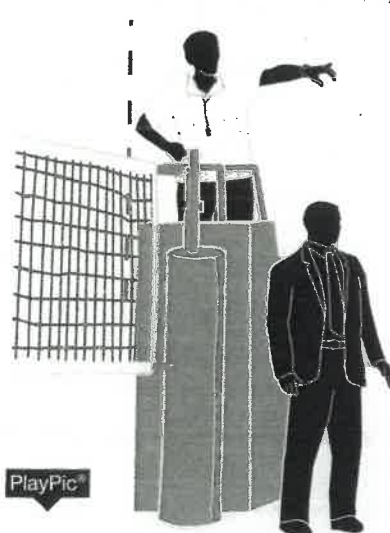
When it comes to unruly behavior from a spectator(s), the first referee should suspend play until host management resolves the situation. Referees should never try

to resolve the problem by themselves. Get the attention of host management and allow them to take care of the problem as seen in the PlayPic.

Confronting a spectator can lead to bigger issues and should be avoided. Allow host management to tend to the situation and suspend the set until you are satisfied the problem has been resolved.

Anytime there is rudeness, vulgar language, remarks regarding race or gender, physical intimidation and other unsporting conduct from spectators that should not be tolerated, it is imperative host management get involved to rectify the situation.

Allowing the inappropriate action to continue will only cause additional problems for everyone involved in the match, including players, coaches, referees and other spectators. □



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MISCELLANEOUS

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QUIZ ANSWERS

BASKETBALL

- 1 — NFHS — c (9-8); NCAAM/W — a (9-10)
 2 — NFHS — c (10-4-6); NCAAM — d (4-15.3.e); NCAAW — b (10-12.3)
 3 — NFHS — d (3-5-6); NCAAM — d (1-23.1); NCAAW — b (1-23.1)
 4 — All — d (NFHS 9-1-1, 9-1-3a, 9-1-3e; NCAAM/W 8-1.1, 9-1.1.a, 9-1.1.d)
 5 — All — d (NFHS 2-10-5; NCAAM/W 2-12.4.a, 2-12.5.a)

BASEBALL

- 1 — NFHS — e (5-1-2c, e-f); NCAA, pro — d (NCAA 6-3a, 8-3g Note; pro 3.07c, 6.01f Cmt.)
 2 — NFHS — b (5-1-1c, 7-4-1a, 7.4.1D); NCAA, pro — c (NCAA 7-10b; pro 6.03a5)
 3 — NFHS — b (5-1-1h); NCAA, pro — a (NCAA 6-5g; pro 5.12b5)
 4 — All — c (NFHS 8-4-2k; NCAA 8-5k; pro 5.06c6)

FOOTBALL

- 1 — Both — a (NFHS 7-5-1, 7-5-2b; NCAA 7-3-2a, 7-3-2e)
 2 — NFHS — c (7-1-9); NCAA — e (7-1-5a-3f)
 3 — NFHS — e (1-5-3c-4 Nt, 1-5-1a-2); NCAA — a (1-4-4a, 1-4-6c)
 4 — NFHS — b (2-28-2, 5-1-3f, 6-2-4, 6-2-6); NCAA — a (6-3-1b)

VOLLEYBALL

- 1 — All — a (NFHS 9-4-6d; NCAA 14.3.3.2; USAV 9.1.2.2)
 2 — NFHS — b (11-2-3); NCAA — c (11.2.2); USAV — a (15.4.1)
 3 — Both — b (NFHS 11-5-2; NCAA 8.4.2.3)
 4 — All — b (NFHS 9-6-4; NCAA 14.6.4.2; USAV 14.3)
 5 — All — b (NFHS 9-5-6b; NCAA 12.1.2.4; USAV 19.3.1.4)

SOFTBALL

- 1 — NFHS — d, e (1-6-2, 3-6-1 Pen., 1.6.2A); NCAA, USA

Softball — a (NCAA 3.7.1 Eff.; USA Softball 3-5e Eff.); USSSA — f, g (2-1)

- 2 — NFHS — a (3-2-12); NCAA — c (no provision); USA Softball, USSSA — b (USA Softball 3-6f; USSSA 2-5)
 3 — All — c (NFHS 8-6-14 Pen.; NCAA 12.13.1.5 Eff.; USA Softball 8-7q Eff.; USSSA 8-18d, 11-2w Pen.)
 4 — NFHS, USA Softball, USSSA — a (NFHS 10-1-4; USA Softball 10-3; USSSA 14-8); NCAA — b (7.3.3 Exc. 2)

SOCCER

- 1 — All — b (NFHS 12-8-2d; NCAA 12.7.4.8.2; IFAB 12.3)
 2 — All — c (NFHS 12-8-1c; NCAA 12.4.3.3; IFAB 12.3)
 3 — All — b (NFHS 12-8-1f-3; NCAA A.R. 12.4.3.5; IFAB 12.3)
 4 — All — a (NFHS 12-7-4; NCAA 12.3.2.2; IFAB 12.2)

JULY

FLASHBACK



40 YEARS AGO ...

1981

• The Washington State Soccer Referees Association (WSSRA) adds a \$5 surcharge to game fees for any game scheduled to start before

5 p.m. WSSRA President Neil West cited officials taking time off work and/or using vacation time necessitating the fee.



30 YEARS AGO ...

1991

• Dave Keenan is assaulted by another member of the Northern Vermont Baseball Umpires Association (NVBUA). Keenan was

pushed to the ground by fellow umpire Pat Alpa, who was serving as a first-base coach in the game, after Alpa's son, Brent, was struck by a batted ball and called for interference. Alpa was banned from the NVBUA for life.



20 YEARS AGO ...

2001

• After 28 years, nearly 2,000 regular-season games and more than 30 NBA Finals contests, NBA referee Hugh Evans retires from the NBA. "It's

time to step aside and make way for the younger officials. I could probably work another two or three years, but why do that and deprive one of our fine young NBA officials of a chance to work the playoffs?" Evans told *Referee*.



10 YEARS AGO ...

2011

• Chicago White Sox Manager Ozzie Guillen is suspended two games and fined \$20,000 for using Twitter to complain about an ejection. Guillen

was ejected by plate umpire Todd Tichenor in the top of the first inning from an April 27 game for arguing balls and strikes. Guillen tweeted, "This one is going to cost me a lot of money this is patetic (sic)," and "Today a tough guy show up a Yankee Stadium (sic)."

MISSION

Referee is a magazine written from an officiating perspective, blending editorial credibility and business viability. It educates, challenges and inspires officials at the youth, recreational, high school, collegiate and professional levels in all sports, with an emphasis on baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball and volleyball. *Referee* is the journal of record for officiating and takes informed positions on selected issues. The magazine provides a forum for its readers, facilitates the flow of information, raises public consciousness about officials' roles and serves as a catalyst for improved officiating worldwide.