

# 'C' YA

## 'Speak' With Crisp, Clear and Consistent Signals



Stacie DeWitt, of Folsom, Calif., knows clear and consistent signaling is important when relaying information to partners, players, coaches and spectators.

By Wade DuBois

If you are an athlete or sporting enthusiast, you probably grew up watching your favorite sports on television. If your beloved sporting event was not broadcast on TV, you may have relied on other media to take in your favorite pastime. Whether that was internet or radio, you put your faith in commentators and radio personalities to communicate what was happening in the competition.

Now, with that in mind, can you remember the first time you attended those same events live? No play-by-play analyst or specialists to convey what is happening; nobody reporting live on the event. Yet if you were already familiar with the sport, you had a good idea what was going on. Why do you suppose that was?

Volleyball, like most other sports, has its own universal language of hand gestures and signals that officials use to communicate with players, coaches and spectators. After a whistle, referees "speak" to participants with hand signals instead of words, as they convey who won the last rally and why.

For the most part, volleyball signals are universal throughout the United States and internationally, where language barriers could be a problem. There are even "informal" signals that referees use to communicate among themselves (or sometimes to participants) to explain why a whistle was not blown, or leading up to why it was. For example, if a back-row player jumps to hit a ball, and her take-off point was near the attack line, the official may use an informal signal, such as a sweeping motion with the hand, to indicate the player was behind the line prior to jumping.

But what if the official is not clear with his or her signals? Do you have difficulty understanding people who

talk too fast? It is no different when referees rush their signals. It tends to confuse everyone involved and leaves people asking, "What was the call?" At the end of the day, it is all about clarity and consistency. Unlike some other sports, volleyball officials are trained and even encouraged to keep the same universal "language" and tempo, no matter how fast and exciting the previous play was. Volleyball is also somewhat unique in training that confusion could result if officials use sloppy or modified signals, especially if it is to bring their own "personality" to the call.

In baseball, the umpire's "out" signal is supposed to be a clenching of the right fist to indicate when a runner is tagged out or forced out; but on a close play, many umpires ratchet it up to a more dramatic gesture that looks more like they're hitting a punching bag. Have you seen umpires call a third strike on a batter? In my opinion, it sometimes borders on humiliating or embarrassing the hitter. Similarly, in basketball, by rule, a "player control foul" (i.e. a "charge") should be indicated with one hand on the back of the head and the other pointing in the opposite direction, showing which team is getting the ball; but some referees bring theatrical expression to the calls and it's acceptable to "hit that punching bag" again.

It goes without saying that to be successful as a sports official, you must possess sound judgment. But different than many other sports, volleyball educators and clinicians discourage officials from deviating from the "official" hand signals and sometimes even judge officials accordingly. If you watch the top volleyball officials in the game, you will see good posture, confident body language, and yes, a strong ability to communicate — with impeccable and consistent hand signals.

As I progressed through the ranks of officiating, I was always trying to fine-tune my craft. I would not only rely on instructors, evaluators and mentors, but I would set up a video camera to record myself officiating my own matches. There was nobody more critical of my performance than

me. That's even easier today with many lower-level matches being streamed online.

I found myself taking on the mechanics and mannerisms of my mentors and those I respected in the sport. I had to find the balance of having neat and crisp hand signals, but not to the point of being robotic. Ideally, I knew I had to keep my signals controlled, with smooth transition. It was important for me to slow down my hand signals and not let my arms just drop to the sides after signaling. Was my thumb out? (It should be tucked in.) Was my "in" signal too low? Was my "out" signal too high? Was I wiping my hand properly on the "touch" signal? All of these were — and still are — extremely important to me, which is why I continually assess my performance by watching video.

Whether we like it or not, from the moment we walk into the venue, others are forming an opinion of us based on the way we are dressed and our ability to communicate in a clear and concise manner. In large part, these are things we can control. I've always been taught, and I pass it on to those who I teach, you have one shot at a good first impression. That first impression could come on arrival at the facility, when you are standing courtside or when you are on the referee stand signaling who won the last rally and why.

For some, officiating is simply a great part-time job; and for others, it's a career that demands a continuous desire to improve with the hope for advancement. For me, I define success in officiating as being asked to officiate in some of the top collegiate conferences in the country. The gateway for me has come by being judged by my carriage, my ability to communicate effectively with others, and yes ... by way of sound hand signals.

Wade DuBois, Granby, Mass., is a PAVO and USAV National referee. He works multiple NCAA Division I conferences and has worked numerous women's and men's postseason tournaments and is the board chair of the Western New England Board of Volleyball Officials. He is also a retired law enforcement officer. □

## QUICKTIP

If you're working on the technique of getting to the side at fault at the end of each rally as the second referee, remember the arm signaling the team that won the rally should be pointing in the direction of the pole. **If you're not pointing in the direction of the pole, you are standing on the wrong side of the court.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

When William G. Morgan invented volleyball in 1895, the bladders of basketballs were originally the "ball" used in the game. In 1900, Morgan asked the factory of A.G. Spalding and Bros. (known today as Spalding) to create a special ball. Spalding created a volleyball that consisted of three layers — a latex bladder made from material similar to a bike tire, a layer of cheesecloth material and a third outer layer made of leather.



## THEY SAID IT

"I had the long walk of shame. I had that self talk in my head, gave myself the business. Had some time to release it by the time I got to the other side."

— NCAA national championship second referee Kalli Kimura, when asked how she moves on from missing a call after watching it on video review.

SOURCE: PAVO VIRTUAL SEMIFINAL CONVERSATION



## 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.

1. S1, the correct server, serves four points. After she serves for the fifth time, the rally is interrupted by the horn, and the referees direct a replay. S2 then serves and scores two points before the scorer notices the wrong server. S2 is preparing to serve again.

a. Cancel the points scored by S2, put the players in the correct order, and allow team S to continue serving.

b. Cancel all points, put the players in the correct order and award a point and the service to team R.

c. Cancel the points scored by S2, put the players in the correct order and award a point and the service to team R.

2. B1 is disqualified for extremely offensive conduct. At the time of disqualification, B1 is on the court in position 3, center front. There are two substitutes on the bench, B2 and B3, as well as the libero. Both substitutes have previously played in this set in other positions.

a. Allow team B to play with five players since they have no legal substitutes.

b. Allow an exceptional substitution using either B2 or B3 as a substitute for B1.

c. Team B is declared incomplete and defaults the set to team A.

d. Allow the libero to be an exceptional substitute for B1.

3. Team R's libero moves to play her team's second contact. One of the libero's feet is in the front zone and the other foot is behind the attack line. Just before contacting the ball, the libero lifts the foot that was in the front zone, and with one foot still in contact with the floor behind the three-meter line, makes an overhand finger pass ("setting" action) to a teammate. The teammate attacks the ball, which is entirely higher than the top of the net. The ball lands on the court of team S.

a. This is a legal play and no fault has occurred. Team R wins the rally.

b. The libero is considered to still be in the front zone. Since the attack-hit by the libero's teammate was completed, this is a fault by team R and team S wins the rally.

## Do Make an Impact

By Bill Thornburgh

There is no definitive process or special formula for successfully advancing to the next level of your officiating career. However, there are things you can do to improve your position and increase your opportunities. These dos of the officiating world could have an impact on your progression.

**Do: Read and Study**

There are rulebooks, casebooks and interpretations — it is important to read them before the season begins. First, knowing the rules and signals are a must in order to whistle a successful match. Second, we must understand how to apply the rules to interesting cases. Third, we should be current with the latest interpretations so we can make the correct decisions in upcoming matches. Even if you have been officiating for years, it is important to review these documents and be up-to-date with your rules knowledge before the season begins and while the season is in session. Additionally, an important reason for studying the rules of the game and casebook scenarios is that you will be more prepared to use rulebook verbiage when supplying answers and explanations to coaches and captains. The most successful referees are able to use clear and succinct communication, using rulebook verbiage, when a situation arises during the match.

**IMPACT:**

You will become a more confident referee through preparation.

You will be perceived as a better referee when you know the rules and communicate clearly with match participants.

**Do: Attend Camps and Training Opportunities**

There are many training opportunities available for volleyball referees. Check with

your local high school assigners or officials associations (NFHS), visit the website for the Professional Association of Volleyball Officials (PAVO/NCAA), or contact USA Volleyball (USAV) to find upcoming camps. These often include classroom sessions and oncourt practical observations that will help you improve your knowledge and skills. Typically, referee camps have a staff of experienced and high-level referees who will deliver valuable performance feedback, discuss philosophies and provide ideas and techniques to help you improve your craft. An additional benefit of attending camps or other training opportunities is you can build or expand your professional network, which is important within the official's cadre. Never underestimate the importance of professional development and being seen by others who may be in a position to mentor you, promote you or assign you.

**IMPACT:**

You will learn from top officials, become a better referee and take an active role in networking. You will have a better chance of achieving your goals by finding a group of supportive, truthful and talented referees to have in your corner.

**Do: Control What You Can Control**

This is simple — control the controllables. Here are a few things that create a professional appearance and could help your chances of advancement: have a clean and unwrinkled uniform, wear pants that fit nicely and are not faded, keep your shoes white (or black and shiny), keep your equipment clean and in good working condition, know the rules, use the proper signals and know the most up-to-date techniques. There are too many things that you cannot control, so take ownership of those in which you can. Here are a few takeaways:

- You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

- Looking the part is an important part of the game.
- Professionalism and appearance increase your believability.

**IMPACT:**

Focus on you and what you can do to become better — look good, look the part and let those in charge see a true professional. This will have a positive impact on others' perception of you and increase opportunities to officiate at a higher level.

**Do: Honor Your Commitments**

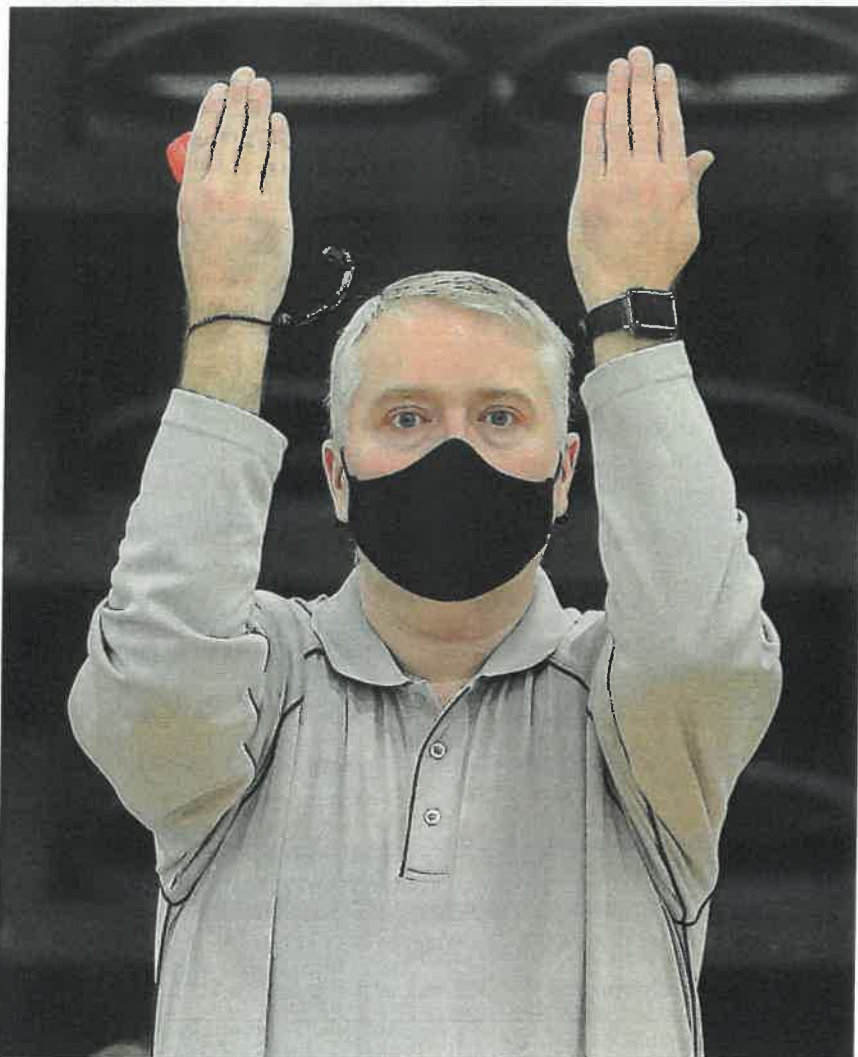
If you sign up for an event, go to the event. Of course, there could be extenuating circumstances that may arise and you are not able to attend. But continually backing out of assignments after acceptance should not become your M.O. It is important to remember, that assigners talk. Do you really want to have this reputation?

There is a right way to go about things and there is a wrong way, so let's examine a few situations in terms of commitment.

1. You sign up for an event and you are accepted — show up.
2. You are at an event and some things are not going well — finish the event and reconsider future attendance.
3. You are at an event and receive your schedule — be there on time.
4. You are in the middle of a match — never walk off the court.
5. You receive another opportunity after you have been accepted to an event — start by contacting the assigner of the original event and ask to be released.

**IMPACT:**

If you become known as a person who flakes out on commitments, assigners will not want to use you anymore. Despite your certification level, your undependable nature will eventually outweigh your worth and you will find yourself on the outside looking in. This will have a negative effect on assignments and advancement.



Michael Holder, Wilmington, N.C., knows appearance is a key factor in improving his schedule. Showing up with the proper uniform that is cleaned and pressed goes a long way in earning the trust of partners, coaches, players and assigners.

**Do: Support Other Officials and Your Partners**

This should go without saying, but be supportive of other referees. When you are observing a match, it always looks different from the sidelines. You cannot say what you would or would not have whistled because you are not under any pressure. It is fine to take notes (written or mental) to ask questions, but avoid being overly critical. Observing matches and how other officials perform is a good way to help you improve your own decision

making and appearance — we can learn from the good and the bad.

Avoid talking negatively about other referees. This type of behavior will eventually get back to the wrong people, which could reflect poorly on you and have a negative impact on future assignments. There is an old saying that is applicable here: "Making others look bad doesn't make you look good."

When it comes to working a match, we must be able to adapt and quickly create a team feel whether we know our partner or

## CASEPLAYS

**Third Timeout**

**Play:** Late in the second set, team A's head coach requests a third timeout after being notified the team has already used two timeouts in the set. **Ruling:** If possible, the second referee should ignore the request but in all codes, if the second referee acknowledges the request, the team shall be penalized accordingly. In NFHS, an unnecessary delay (administrative yellow card for the first offense or administrative red card for subsequent offenses in that set) shall be assessed (11-2-3 Pen. 2). In NCAA and USAV, an improper request is charged to the team (NCAA 6.2.2.8, 6.2.3.1; USAV 16.1).

**Uniform Logos**

**Play:** All of team A's players have a manufacturer's logo that is less than 14.6 square cm (2-1/4 square inches). However, one team A player's shorts has a different manufacturer's logo than the rest of the team. **Ruling:** In all codes, the logos are legal. While each piece of the uniform is allowed a single manufacturer's logo, the rules do not require the logos to be identical (NFHS 4-2-1d, f; NCAA 7.1.1.1; USAV 4.3.5).

**Second Referee Responsibility**

**Play:** The second referee whistles and signals out as the ball contacts the antenna on his or her side. The first referee signals the result of the play as a point. **Ruling:** Correct procedure in all codes. It is the second referee's responsibility to whistle when a ball contacts or travels over or outside the antenna on his or her side. The first referee will then award the point (NFHS 5-5-3b-1; NCAA 19.3.7.1.3; USAV 24.3.2.3).

**Position Fault?**

**Play:** Team R's center front setter is straddling the feet of the center back player at the moment of service. **Ruling:** In all codes, no position fault has occurred. The rules require the center front to have at least part of one foot closer to the centerline than the feet of the center back player. She has met that requirement in this play (NFHS 6-4-3b; NCAA 10.3.1.1; USAV 7.4.2.1).

not. Teamwork and communication are vital to our success — conduct a pre-match discussion, know your responsibilities, allow your partner to perform his or her duties, protect and serve during the match and have an honest (and constructive) post-match debrief. These are the conversations that should make us reflect on decisions and gather feedback we can take forward.

**IMPACT:**

By being supportive, focusing on your own abilities and working hard you will be perceived as:

- A student of the game.
- A team player.
- A solid partner.
- A valuable member of the referee cadre.

These will all eventually lead to career advancement opportunities.

**Do: Let Your Body of Work Speak for Itself**

You think you are better than other referees at a tournament, but they are getting higher-level matches — focus on you, your assignments and do your best. You cannot control what assignments others get, but you do have direct input on the effort and performance you put forward on the matches you are assigned. And please remember, no matter your certification, you are never too good to work a certain level match. If you get assigned to 12-and-under matches, do it and do your best. If you consistently perform well — no matter the level of play — coaches, tournament directors, other referees and (hopefully) assigners will take notice.

**IMPACT:**

Do not underestimate the role of perseverance, hard work and consistency. Accept your assignments with grace and perform with excellence. Keep your nose to the grindstone and you will be rewarded with opportunity.

**Do: Take Your Time and Build Skills**

There is no hurry. There is no substitute for experience. Slow down

and enjoy the ride. It is important to take every opportunity to learn, to ask questions, to experience weird out-of-the-ordinary plays, to work with many different partners (good and bad), to get yelled at and to work up the ladder at the current level. For instance, in USAV, you recently earned your Jr. National certification and you are already planning to get your National certification in two years. But wait ... why?

My advice to anyone who asks (or cares) is to work up the ladder and be one of the best referees at the level you are at first. When you go to bigger tournaments and you regularly receive assignments on gold semifinals and finals, then it is time to consider advancement. If those top assignments never come, why jump to the next level with even more experienced, higher-level referees? Here is another important takeaway — it's not the color of the patch that makes you a good referee.

**IMPACT:**

Take the time to prepare, to learn and to be better equipped to handle any situation. The old saying goes, "Proper preparation prevents poor performance." Here is a final thought. Even if you are in a hurry, the result may be a new patch, but not being properly prepared and possessing the necessary skills will eventually lead to poor performance. Poor performance will not be rewarded with better assignments and advancement, so be patient.

Those are things you can do and decisions you can make to help you improve and advance in your quest for higher certification and better matches (rather than things you should not do). Please remember there are many other factors that ultimately contribute to success and you should not allow those factors to affect how you whistle a match or affect your character. *Bill Thornburgh, Shelbyville, Ky., is a National USAV and PAVO referee, as well as a FIVB International referee. He works in the Big Ten, Atlantic Coast, Southeastern and other D-I conferences around the Midwest. □*

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AUGUST

## FLASHBACK



### 40 YEARS AGO ... 1981

Fairfax County (Va.) amends licensing requirements after soccer referee **Dan Soares** and others from the District of Columbia

Virginia Soccer Referees Association received a notice to apply for a special business license. Soares earned \$215 for work during the 1980 season and was notified he was required to maintain a business license.



### 30 YEARS AGO ... 1991

Lacrosse referee **Larry Datz** receives a \$15,000 settlement after being assaulted during a high school game in New York. Datz told *Referee*

he was punched by a player's parent in the midst of a brawl near the end of the game.



### 20 YEARS AGO ... 2001

College baseball umpire **Dominic Valenza** is cited by an off-duty police officer for failing to stop at a stop sign. The officer had been watching

the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) game Valenza was working. ECAC Commissioner Phil Buttafuoco requested the chief of police and the mayor of Jersey City to "make sure the umpire deserved the ticket."



### 10 YEARS AGO ... 2011

A U.S. district court judge in Illinois rules former MLS referee **Marcel Yonan** served as an independent contractor during

his 25-year affiliation with the USSF and dismisses Yonan's age discrimination lawsuit. The judge ruled Yonan's 2007 USSF registration form "does not create an employment contract or relationship with USSF."

## QUIZ ANSWERS

### BASKETBALL

- 1 — All — a (NFHS 2-10-4; NCAAM/W 2-12.4)  
 2 — All — a (NFHS 3-4-3d; NCAAM 1-22.7.b.2, 10-2.3.b; NCAAW 1-22.7.b.2, 10-12.2.c.2)  
 3 — All — d (NFHS 4-20-3; NCAAM 8-1.4.b; NCAAW 8-1.4.b, A.R. 226)  
 4 — NFHS — d (10-1); NCAAM/W — a (NCAAM 10-2.1; NCAAW 10-12.2.a.2)  
 5 — All — c (NFHS 4-22.; 9.12B, 9.12C NCAAM 9-15.3.b; NCAAW 9-15.4)

### BASEBALL

- 1 — NFHS — d (6-1-2); NCAA, pro — e (NCAA 9-1a; pro 5.07a1)  
 2 — All — b (NFHS 6-2-5; NCAA 9-3f; pro 6.02a9)  
 3 — NFHS, NCAA — e (NFHS 7-3-2; NCAA 7-8); pro — d (6.03a1)  
 4 — All — d (NFHS 7-4-1e, f; NCAA 7-11i, 8-5q; pro 5.03c, 5.09a4)  
 5 — All — d (NFHS 7-1-1 Pen. 3; NCAA 7-11a3; pro 6.03b3)

### FOOTBALL

- 1 — Both — b (NFHS 2-13-4, 8.5.3B, 10-3-1a; NCAA 8-7, 10-2-2d-4, A.R. 8-7-2 IV)  
 2 — NFHS — b (2-9-3, 2-9-4, 4-2-2g, 6-5-7); NCAA — a (4-1-3g)  
 3 — NFHS — a (9-4-3b); NCAA — b, c (9-2-1j, 9-2-6a, A.R. 9-2-1X)  
 4 — NFHS — b (3-4-2c, 3.4.2C); NCAA — a (3-3-2d-8; 3-3-2f)  
 5 — Both — a (NFHS 7-5-6b, 7-5-13; NCAA 7-3-11)

### SOFTBALL

- 1 — All — c (NFHS 8-6-16c Pen.; NCAA 11.20.2 Eff., 12.17.3.1 Eff.; USA Softball 8-7p Eff.; USSSA 8-18h Note 2)  
 2 — NFHS, USA Softball, USSSA — d (NFHS 7-4-4 Pen.; USA Softball 7-8u Eff.; USSSA 7-12 Pen.); NCAA — c (11.20.2 Eff. Exc. 1)  
 3 — All — b (NFHS 8-2-6; NCAA 12.5.5; USA Softball 8-2e; USSSA 8-17e)  
 4 — All — b (NFHS 2-24, 8-2-

- 2; NCAA 12.5.1, 12.9.2; USA Softball 1-Force Out, 8-2b; USSSA 3-Force Play, 8-17d)

### SOCCER

- 1 — All — c (NFHS 13-3-1; NCAA 13.2.3; IFAB 13.2)  
 2 — All — c (NFHS 11 Diagram 10; NCAA 11 Diagram 10; IFAB 11.2)  
 3 — All — b (NFHS 3-3-2b-2; NCAA 3.5.9; IFAB 5.3)  
 4 — All — b (NFHS 13-3-1; NCAA 13.2.1; IFAB 13.3)

### VOLLEYBALL

- 1 — All — c (NFHS 6-4-3b, 6-4-6 Pen. 2; NCAA 10.3.2; USAV 7.3.5.3)  
 2 — NFHS — a (6-2-2, 10-4-3c); NCAA, USAV — c (NCAA 6.1.2.3 Note, 8.5.2.2; 12.3.2.2; USAV 15.8)  
 3 — All — a (NFHS 9-5-6b; NCAA 12.1.2.4; USAV 19.3.1.4)

## 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.