

# What Comes After the Ejection?

What separates elite officials from merely competent ones is how they handle what comes after an ejection, when emotions may still be running high.

Three Things that come after the Ejection.

- 1) Finish The Game
- 2) Write Your Report
- 3) Don't Let Hard Feelings Carry Over

## 1) Finish the Game

Here are a few suggestions for keeping a game flowing smoothly after you or your partner has had to send someone off for the day.

- **Interject your presence if your partner has issued the ejection.** It's time for you to step in and calm the situation. A good partner will handle the coach or player who has been ejected. Escort him off the field and if it is a coach, make sure he leaves the confines of the field before your partner tries to resume the game. Players are confined to the dugout, but coaches must leave the field area. If the coach has been ejected make sure there is another adult coach to take his place.
  - **Stay calm.** That is standard operating procedure for both umpires. Players watch you. Your calm demeanor may not, by itself, keep them simmered down. But if you don't keep your cool, odds of the players doing so are reduced.
  - **Don't change the way you're calling the game.** Fight the temptation to change your pattern of calls after an incident occurs. Strive for consistency. Don't pass on a foul to get the game over; don't give "gifts" to a team that just lost a player or coach. If you adjust your calls, you're giving the advantage to the team that had the ejection.
  - **Communicate when necessary.** There are varying opinions on how much officials should talk to participants. The key word is necessary. If you have just ejected a team's cleanup hitter over a called third strike, you likely don't want to chat when that team's catcher comes out the next half-inning. Stick to business. But if he starts grumbling, cut him off. Say something like, "Look, he said what he felt he had to say and I did what I had to do. Play ball."
- Every sport has unwritten rules of conduct. In more cases than not players, particularly experienced ones, know when they've crossed the line. They may not be happy if one of their teammates got "the boot," but they'll understand where you were coming from.

## 2) Write Your Report

Compare thoughts with your partner after the game, and write your report as soon as possible after you get home, while everything is still fresh in your mind. All Ejections need to have a written report.

- **Call your assigner** and tell him about the ejection and tell him you will be sending him your written report.
- **Report only the facts.** Don't give opinions, don't embellish, and don't "sugar coat" any words that were exchanged. Use the exact words in your report that you heard. Don't

report “the coach used abusive language”, or “the coach used the F word”. State exactly what was said. If the coach, or player said “you’re a fuckin joke”, then spell it all out in your report.

- **State when the ejection took place...** “The coach was ejected in the bottom of the 4<sup>th</sup> inning with one out.”
- **Describe the exact situation** that caused the ejection. Don’t report “the coach had been questioning our calls all day”. The only thing that should be stated is what exactly caused you at that moment to eject him. For example, you should state ... “in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning I verbally warned the coach not to argue balls & strikes. I gave the coach a ‘Strike One’ written warning in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning for again questioning balls & strikes. I ejected him in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning for again arguing balls & strikes, and upon being ejected the coach told me ‘you’re fuckin terrible’.”
- **If you lost your temper** and you said or did something you might now regret state it in your report. I guarantee that if you omit your actions or words, it will come back to bite you, and you will lose your credibility. Be honest and own up to it in your report.
- **Email your report that same day**, or if not possible, then very early the next day, to your assigner, our WMBUA secretary, and your partner. If the game is a high school MIAA game, then address your report to the home team Athletic Director and cc your assigner, our WMBUA secretary, and your partner.

### 3) Don’t let Hard Feelings Carry Over

If you stick around the officiating business long enough, you will encounter a coach who just does not like your act and is on you from Day One. There may be many reasons. Maybe it's a personality conflict. Maybe you were involved in a big brouhaha and the coach has never gotten over it. Or maybe he is new to the business and is insecure, and tries to mask it by trying to bully officials at every opportunity. How do you set aside personal dislike and ignore it? How do you avoid the temptation to "stick it to 'em"? It can be hard to develop a thick enough skin to be able to put bad blood aside and call the game as it should be called, without regard to personalities. One admittedly extreme way to handle the problem of coaches who don't like us is to refuse to work their games. I'm not advocating that as a common practice — it arguably is an admission that we can't handle adversity. But it is an option, at least at some levels.

**The key to handling the situation is professionalism.** That's an overworked term, but I can't think of a better one. When we're working games involving coaches who don't like us, we have to force ourselves to do what we expect them to do: Treat each day like a new day, each inning like a new inning, etc. We may cringe when we see games involving that coach on our schedule, but we have to be professional. When we go out on the field in that situation, we have to be in the frame of mind that we're not going to treat that coach any differently than we would anyone else. Give a firm handshake, make eye contact and say, "Afternoon, Coach." Don't try small talk or jokes, because it is likely to come across as phony or that you're trying too hard. Don't say or do anything that raises the specter of past games or encounters. On the flip side, don't do or say anything that suggests you are intimidated, such as not making eye contact or approaching in some way different from how you approach the opposing coach. A sign of weakness on your part will only make things worse.

Generally speaking, that's harder to do when you're new to officiating. When you are starting out you haven't yet figured out what does and does not work in terms of official-coach relationships. You'll have a tough enough time dealing with relatively calm coaches who may get on you about a particular call, much less the ones that have no use for any umpires from the start. As we become more experienced, however, it gets easier to deal with problem coaches. We eventually get to where we know we'll never be on good terms, but we also know how to get through the contest at hand unscathed.

We can't control what coaches think of us. All we can do is to treat the coaches in the same professional manner — at least until they give us a reason not to do so. You might even hear a coach say, after a pitch or call, "We always get the raw end of the deal when he's here," or some such phrase that invokes the past. In which case you might go to the coach during a break in the action and say, as calmly as possible, "Coach, today is today. I don't intend to get into anything that's gone on in the past, and I expect you to do the same. Let's keep things on a professional level."

Don't get personal, even if an argument ensues. If you do, you'll give the coach a golden opportunity to run to your assigner and say that you were out to get him in the first place. Talk about the play, not personalities. Whatever the coach might do or say, don't respond in kind — no name-calling, no invocation of history, etc. Don't give any ammunition to use against you. For whatever reason, fair or unfair, some of us are just going to rub each other the wrong way. Recognizing that we expect coaches to deal with us without regard to what has happened in the past, we need to go into those games with the attitude that we're going to treat that coach the same way we treat every other coach. Forget the past. Every game is a new one.