

## Mentor Information

Congratulations! It is an honor that you have been selected for this program, and entrusted with the future of lacrosse officiating in your area! We wish to thank you for agreeing to participate in the US Lacrosse, Officials Mentoring Program.

As an experienced lacrosse official, your contributions to the sport can move beyond the athletic fields by providing advanced training, career development, and fellowship to young officials trying to learn the game, or progress upward through the officiating ranks. In this manner, your investment in mentoring builds camaraderie, strengthens your local association, protects the culture and character of lacrosse, and promotes the sport by giving something back to the game.

You have been selected to serve as a US Lacrosse Official's Mentor because you possess both the experience and positive characteristics of a highly effective lacrosse official. However, evaluating junior, novice, or rookie officials, requires: 1) a commitment of time and energy, 2) a reserve of patience, and 3) a blend of compassion, tact, and diplomacy, that needs to be developed in order to simultaneously encourage and critique young officials. Becoming a strong mentor will help you to become a better lacrosse official.

An important component of the US Lacrosse, Officials Mentoring Program is the evaluation of young officials at the end of the season, and the careful construction of feedback to young officials, regarding their strengths and weaknesses. On the following pages you will find detailed Mentor Guidelines for lacrosse mentors to follow.

## **Mentor Philosophy and Responsibilities:**

Mentoring is a retention issue. When reduced to its essential function, mentoring is the “*care and feeding of rookie officials.*”

### **You are in control of this important relationship.**

- If mentoring succeeds or fails, it will be largely due to the effort and the energy that you expend on the relationship.
- Remember, you have the information, the perspective, and the experience that new officials need and desire.

### **Don't let your mentee disappear on you.**

- Check in every 10-14 days if you haven't heard anything from your protégée.
- Our presumption: A rookie official who has no questions, has either not been working, or has already quit!

### **Let your mentee know the “ground rules” for the relationship.**

- Establish what it is that you want to accomplish with your protégée. How will the relationship work?
- When and how often you will accept calls (time of day/evening), the length of calls (ground rules, etc.)
- Will you require a “cooling off” policy where your mentee refrains from calling immediately after games?
- Will e-mail be a part of your mentoring strategy? If so what conditions will you require?
- Will you allow cell phone calls?

### **Take an interest in your protégé's life outside of lacrosse.**

- In terms of time and effort, what does it “cost” your protégée to officiate? How serious are they?
- How much freedom does your mentee have to attend other games?
- What does your protégé wish to accomplish by officiating lacrosse?
- Learn the names of your mentee's spouse/significant other, and children (if any).

### **Lose the arrogance of thinking of that you know it all.**

- Constantly remind yourself how lost you were during your first season. Remember your first game!
- Be part psychologist, part parental confessor, part friend, part co-worker.
- Be human! Admit to your own mistakes in the game. Share these shortcomings often.

**Find a place where you can concentrate on your discussion without distractions, for the length of time agreed upon.**

- Give your protégé your undivided attention.
- By prior agreement, try and allocate adequate time for these interactions.

**Listen carefully to what your mentee is saying (and what s/he is not saying). If your protégé has no questions, probe about to get him or her talking about lacrosse in general, and things to discuss will arise.**

- Break game situations down into component parts:
  - What level of competition was the game in question?
  - What was the demeanor of the coaches and players?
  - What actions occurred, and under what game circumstances?
  - What rulings or judgments were made in response to these variables?
- Be patient with your protégé.
- Don't rush into making judgments about his or her potential.
- Like any strong relationship, mentoring is built upon trust—which takes time to acquire.
- Refrain from giving advice. Suggest optional ways to look at the situation in question.
  - "I would have..." or "You should have..." are poor mentoring strategies that tend to inhibit thinking.
  - If it is a rules interpretation, share your knowledge only after your protégé has display their knowledge.
  - If it is judgment that was in question, suggest the range of responses that were available to the mentee.
  - If it is a question of attitude, try and place your protégé in other people's shoes.
  - If it is a question of communication, suggest the range of options that result from gaining composure and sizing up the communication situation.
  - Approach each mentoring session as a means to expand the mentees horizons and officiating options.
- Reassure and praise your protégée after ever conversation. Keep your mentee enthusiastic.
  - Don't focus solely on performance or behaviors that need to improve: tell your protégé when he or she is doing something well

## Things to work into the conversation:

- The balance between what the rules state, and the judgment that is used when interpreting the rules.
  - This part of the officiating rubric is defined under “advantage/disadvantage.”
  - The areas called “officiating irritants” or the things that officials do that annoy coaches and players.
- The importance of safety and how it is interpreted in the context of aggressive play.
- Differences between how you must call the game based upon the level and intensity of the contest.
- How players like to take advantage of the rules.
- The difference between player enthusiasm and taunting on the field.

## **Additionally, you can mentor young officials about a host of issues and concepts that veterans have picked up over the years. Many of these issues deal with the culture and character of the game.**

- Understanding the intimidating position that officials are in and how to overcome this situation.
- Dealing with pressure:
  - When games tighten up.
  - How, when, and where to use your flags (or cards).
  - How to work your way through various situations on the field.
- Different whistle techniques, and how they communicate urgency to the players.
  - How to use your whistle in communicating with players and coaches.
- Getting it right:
  - The crew concept: Understanding your role on the crew and the purpose of the crew.
  - When to reach across the field and help your partner and when not to.
  - Covering the field for your partners without ‘over officiating.’
- How to communicate with the players - when to joke with them and when not to.
- How to encourage technical skills as opposed to physical skills.
- How to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable team individual and team behaviors.
- Informal tools at your disposal to control conduct on the field.
- How to communicate with the coaches.
  - How to channel and control, assistant coach enthusiasm.
  - Recognizing and diffusing potential official/coach conflicts.
- Getting support from the table (scorekeepers and timers).
  - Teaching leadership on the field.
  - Verbally reward those behaviors that foster sportsmanship and camaraderie.
  - Verbally discourage those acts that are self-centered, or that place the individual above the team.
- Using the internet to prepare for games.
- How to adjust your officiating to the weather conditions.
- How conditions affect play and performance.
- Tips on staying dry or keeping warm/cool.

**Cross-check your mentee's perception of game situations with your colleagues with whom your protégé has worked.**

- Just as you strive for objectivity, you need to help your mentee develop objectivity as well.

**Work with your assignor to schedule at least one game with your mentee during the season (the earlier the better).**

- Don't rush off after a game. See if you can't sit down with your protégé for a few minutes to 1/2 hour.
- Your personal observations of your mentees performance are the most powerful tools that you have.

**At the end of the season, convey your impression of the relationship to the assignor with a clear and distinct recommendation.**

- Has your mentee been observed by others? Is s/he aware of her/his strengths and shortcomings?
- Assess your mentees potential to work on an officiating crew (leadership, demeanor, ego, cooperation, etc.).
- Share your evaluation with your mentee (perform some closure to this process for both of you).