



Officials Develop Players Too

Denver's Kelly, Boston University's Robertshaw say meaningful moments with stripes helped shape their careers

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The US Lacrosse National Convention, presented by Champion, often has sessions geared toward making the coach/official relationship at a minimum functional, and ideally harmonious. I was struck by something Temple women's lacrosse coach Bonnie Rosen said in one such session. Officials, the former U.S. team defender said, had a profound positive effect on her as a player. She remembered positive interactions she had with officials and was surprised when officials remembered or praised her. Those interactions increased her affinity for the game.

It got me thinking, "If Rosen feels this way, I bet other college coaches do too." So I turned to Denver's Liza Kelly and Boston University's Liz Robertshaw – formerly players at Delaware and George Mason, respectively – for their input on how officials enhanced their playing and coaching experiences.

Is there a positive interaction with an official that has stayed with you? Why?

LK: Love this question! As a center, I enjoyed chatting with the ref setting up the draw. I always liked the official who could joke with me on a call – especially when I thought I didn't foul someone. Sue Diffenderfer was great at this. She was confident she made the correct call but didn't want to blow the whistle constantly. I can remember playing at Towson (I went to Delaware) and her telling me, "Hey 25, mark up or get out!" I wish officials today would do that.

LR: Being a mark-up defender, there were plenty of interactions. During my senior year, in a tight and heated game against Loyola, I had been called for a handful of fouls – and some I very much disagreed with because I thought they were offensive charges. After a foul call late in the second half gave Erin Wylde, Loyola's leading scorer, a free position, I was definitely about to lose my temper. At the perfect moment Pat Dillon subtly walked over to me and caught my attention before I said anything. She let me know this wasn't the time to say something, that I would regret it and to keep playing solid defense but make a small adjustment. In that moment she showed me so much respect that I knew right away how special it was. And I still remember it today.



As a player, did you have a favorite official?

LK: As a coach, I feel like I have a great relationship with the officials. In my first year at Denver, I got my one and only yellow card from Jen Dorff. I was hollering about some call and she turned to the sideline and said something along the lines of, “That’s enough coach, not another word.” Like a 2-year-old, I said something else and she carded me. I apologized for it after the game and she said it was no big deal. “You were doing your job and I was doing mine.”

I also enjoy officials I can speak to about things other than lacrosse. When we travel east, it is fun to see John Federline and Fran Trumbo, who reffed me as a player. I want to be able to joke around with them before the game, and then once that first whistle blows, we can get down to business.

LR: Susie Ganzenmuller. There was a way she would control a game and speak to us that I really respected. She would listen to you as a player and hear your concerns, not cut you off or be condescending. She’d let you know when to cool your temper and when enough was enough, but at the same time tell you at the end of a game when you made nice plays. As a junior and senior I got to know more of the officials because of my role as a captain. When I went to the pre-game meeting and saw Susie, I felt it would be a fairly called game because she always seemed to do what’s right by the players.

When I asked Kelly and Robertshaw about this existing in lacrosse today, both indicated officials like this are out there working your games every day. They enjoy seeing their players have these kinds of moments with officials. While it would take an act of Congress to have a “National Ref Appreciation Day,” take a day in the height of your April lacrosse season to foster or notice this important facet of the game.