



Flush 'Em and Move On

Don't carry mistakes like luggage. Use them as a source of growth.

Author: Lucia Perfetti Clark

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In baseball, they say the best hitters forget their last at bat. Officials could benefit from this philosophy. We're rule followers. We take pride in knowing the rules and applying them correctly. So when we make mistakes, it can be hard for us to quickly process the mistake and move on so that we are 100 percent in the present moment in the game rather than dwelling on the mistake we made – the call we want back.

Officials who take the idea of perfection too far are their own worst enemies. We are human, and we will make mistakes. Our objectives are to limit the number of mistakes and limit their impact of the outcome of a game.

In line with those major league hitters, when I coaches youth lacrosse, I asked all of my goalies to come up with a word or a phrase, something they would say to themselves when they got scored on. The phrase acted as a memory eraser. Once uttered, it allowed them to flush that goal out of their system. I often would shout the same phrase from the sideline to let them know that, as their coach, I also had moved on. As an official, you should have this kind of mental process in your tool kit of emotional coping skills. In the moment, a word or phrase could help move you along. Since the game is not stopping for you to process your mistake, say your piece and get back in the game.

Once you're in the locker room, talk about it with your partners. What did they see? Maybe they can give you a better perspective on the mistake. If it was a real biggie, like one which required a conference of officials or additional clarification for coaches, ask the home coach or facility operators for the game film.

Good coaches understand we are human, we take our profession seriously and we want to learn from our mistakes. Get the film. Study it. Try to find the exact moment when you could have changed your behavior and made the right call.

These calls end up being the ones that we master, the ones that stay with us. In this context, a big mistake is a blessing in disguise.

Whatever you do, as renowned college women's official Patty Daley said at the US Lacrosse National Convention in January, "Don't wait a year to ask me about a situation we had on a game together." Don't carry your mistakes like luggage. They only weigh you down and make you unsure of yourself. In the moment, flush them, discuss, them afterward, process them and plan how to not make the same mistakes in the future. When we handle them well, mistakes make us better as officials.