



Keeps Up With the Pace of Play

Author: Gordon Corsetti

March 18, 2015

Being a young official makes it hard to form working bonds with coaches because nearly all of them are older than me and I do not have the same life experiences to relate to. Fortunately a few years ago there was a high school coach closer to my age, and we had a good give and take whenever I officiated one of his team's games. I thought our ages made the coach/official relationship better, but that was not the case. This coach made a comment that stuck with me. He said: "Gordon, I don't always agree with your calls but you always hustle and you don't take plays off. I want that in all of my players, and I respect that in an official."

I spoke with a few LAREDO clinicians about hustle while revising the Level 2 and 3 evaluation forms, which will be made available before the [summer LAREDOs get going](#). I wanted to keep the term "hustle" as an evaluation factor that observers used to grade officials. A few clinicians convinced me to change that term to "keeps up with the pace of play," because each official can have very different definitions of hustle but whether or not an official can keep up with the pace of play is a yes or no answer.

Some officials never stop sprinting. They are constantly in motion and run at full speed even if the play in front of them does not call for it. This was me when I started officiating. I never needed to anticipate how the play might develop because my quickness could get me where I had to go. I was hustling more than I was officiating, and I had to learn to slow down and anticipate more. When I did that I found myself in the correct position more easily especially in the fourth quarter because I hadn't been sprinting like a madman for the first three.

Other officials never sprint, but if they move at a brisk jog one time they'll credit that as hustling. If you are serious about improving the games on your schedule from last season you have to match the speed of the play on the field in every game. That doesn't mean you're sprinting all over the field, but that you run hard when you need to and you jog to position when you don't.

The main reason I changed my mind on the term "hustle" is that several clinicians told me they would mark an official down for poor hustle and the official did not understand why because he was running as hard as he could. This is where the term "hustle" is relative. My hustle as a 160 pound, twenty-seven year old is going to look much different when compared to a 280 pound forty-eight year old. Can we both run as hard as we physically can for the duration of a game? Absolutely. Can I keep up with the pace of play more consistently than the other official? Most definitely. This is why the term on the revised evaluation forms is now: "keeps up with the pace of play."



The pace of every game will be different. Some games are slow with deliberate settled offenses on each side of the field while other games are up-and-down affairs made faster and more unpredictable if both teams have trouble clearing the ball. "Keeps up with the pace of play" means the official matches the speed of the game and can adjust based on the play. For example, a relatively slow game can have moments of speed. If you are the Trail official and a midfielder misses a pass above the box that could turn into a fast break that will require you to turn up the field and sprint for the opposite goal as the new Lead official.

I am convinced that this is a better term for evaluations because it is a definitive statement. Did the official keep up with the pace of play for the entire game - Yes or No?

This means that the officials hustling to the best of their physical ability, but still cannot keep pace with the play will get marked down. Will they get praise for running as hard as they can when needed? I would hope so, but this term will impress upon some officials that running as hard as they can is not enough to officiate consistently at a high level if they want to reach higher levels.

This also means that the officials who go too fast and don't show the ability to anticipate will get marked down. They will get props for their hard running, and they will be informed about how important it is to anticipate where the play will go. Officials do not get to sub out when they get tired and the official sprinting every which way on the field just to run hard will eventually tire out in the fourth quarter and miss something due to their exhaustion. Anticipation lets officials gauge when they need to run hard and when they can conserve energy for the next burst of speed.

Finally, the officials who can physically keep up with the pace, but would rather mosey up the field will get dinged. This is pure laziness. If you can run and the play demands that you run, but you don't then what is the point of being on the field? You can't officiate from the midline cone in a high school game. Heck, you can't do that in a youth game, but our clinicians have seen it and a few past evaluations show it. Part of getting evaluated is performing well on what you can control and your ability to keep up with the play is an area you have total control over. Don't give the observer a reason to mark you down for something that is entirely within your ability to excel at.

This term cuts across all types of officials, which is why "keeps up with the pace of play" is the term that will be in front of observers using the new evaluation forms, and that will be the expectation for the officials being evaluated at LAREDO clinics and if officials are observed locally using the revised US Lacrosse Level 2 and 3 evaluation forms.