



The “BizLax-icon”

Author: John “Biz” Bistowski

June 23, 2015

One of the most useful tools in conveyance of thought is the use of analogy. I love a good analogy; be it simile, metaphor, or even a relatable life experience. It is amazing to see people’s eyes light up in that moment of understanding when you use a term or situation they understand that coincides directly with the separate – yet analogous - matter at hand. When one sells a difficult-to-explain idea through an analogy, it’s as if being seated at the 50-yard line for opening kick-off on Super Bowl Sunday; flash bulbs of thought popping all over the place.

Did you just see those flash-bulbs in your mind? The stadium? The crowd? If you did, then you can clearly see the power of analogy.

As a lacrosse trainer, one of the most difficult tasks at hand is to take years of experience and knowledge and pass it down to trainees and general membership of your association in a way that sticks. One tool I keep handy for classroom presentations is analogy. Personal fouls = felonies, technical fouls = misdemeanors. One is a high crime and compels an official to sentence an offending party to jail time (Penalized player to the penalty area 1-3 minutes, no appeal), the other could result in minimal custody (30 seconds) or most likely a rebuke or loss of privilege (i.e. loss of possession). Those are perfect examples of analogy. The following are some terms I use in the classroom, on the field, or during a post-game debrief when I need to explain the play, the rules, and mechanics of lacrosse. They are all part of my personal “BizLax-icon”.

Mow the Lawn

When you as the Lead official are along GLE in a settled situation and there is nothing between you and the crease line except green grass... Mow the Lawn (get closer to the crease)!

Cut down the distance between your present location and the place where impending action may take place. Aside from always trying to get as close to the crease as possible at any time, situations where a midfielder is barreling down the lane towards goal, or when attacker bobs and weaves through the thicket of defensemen to get between them and the crease, are exactly the times when the Lead should break out his John Deere and mow that lawn between him and the net.



Master-Of-His-Domain

To get new officials (and even more experienced ones) to cut through the nuances of crease privileges and prohibitions, I often relate to the class that the designated, fully-equipped goaltender in lacrosse is the Master-Of-His-Domain. The primary message of this BizLax-icon is if the goalkeeper that is within his crease is contacted or disadvantaged in any shape or manner by an opponent that has invaded the cylinder, just err on the side of caution and call the violation against the offense.

Crease violation, interference, illegal body check – not sure which one fits? Well call SOMETHING! And make sure it goes the goalkeeper's way as he is the Master-Of-His-Domain.

If a ball is stuck in the goalkeeper's equipment do we go alternate possession? Heck, no! He's in his domain (crease) where he is master; goalkeeper's ball.

If the ball gets stuck in the netting behind the goal is that AP? Uh-uh, my friend. You may as well have knocked the ball into that grumpy old man's front yard down the street from your house. You're not getting it back as it belongs to the land-owner now.

... The landowner otherwise known as: The Master-Of-His-Domain.

Doing Nothing, Nothing Doing

As a kid growing up outside of Boston, I was naturally ingrained with the love-hate relationship that was the City and the Boston Red Sox in the 1970s & '80s. At the time, the team's two-headed monster of general manager and president – Lou Gorman and Haywood Sullivan – were aptly named "Doing Nothing and Nothing Doing" for their front office ineptness and lack of putting a World Series-caliber team on the field.

Well in lacrosse, I use the Doing Nothing, Nothing Doing mantra in pre-game discussions with crewmates to explain whether or not a play-on is on order vs. quickly blowing the whistle. More often than not we're going to blow quickly and that's where Blue Lou and Hayseed Sully come in:

If there's nothing doing that is advantageous to the offended team, such as a ball being batted in multi-player scrum or it rolls away from the scrum where the violation occurred and an elongated chase for it ensues... BLOW THE WHISTLE! There's Nothing Doing there. Get it off the ground, put it in a player's stick and restart play anew.



If there's nothing the offended team could do even if it gained possession like running towards a sideline after scooping a ground ball or coming up from a defenseless position in a forest of defenders, then kill that play STAT! He's going to do nothing with it anyway except run out of bounds or get his hat handed to him. The only thing he can do in those situations is nothing.

Forget the play on if there's nothing doing or doing nothing. It will save you a lot of grief.

Jumped On a Grenade

No one is going to win a Congressional Medal of Honor in lacrosse, but sure enough many a player sure would know what to do if live ordnance rolled into their team's encampment. Say what?

No need to be literal here; jumping on a grenade refers to the player who in a desperate attempt to keep a loose ball from getting into enemy hands will flop to the ground and onto the ball in such a contrived manner that it becomes comical to watch. His intent is to see if he can sell a push to the on official.

Sometimes a player can, but if you've been introduced to the BizLax-icon way of seeing things, it's more than likely you're going to go with a withholding call and award the ball to his nemeses.

The correct call will simply let that player know his practiced ploy attempting to buy a call will only blow up on him.

Lemons

Like a car dealer, lacrosse officials often have to 'sell' their calls. But just like that salesman you want to make sure the product doesn't break down in embarrassing fashion before it even gets off the lot.

Don't be a con-artist! If you make a bad call and need to fix it... Then fix it!

The last thing you want to do is lose your integrity. If you start or continue to sell lemons on the field, the local Better Business Bureau (assigner, association leaders, etc.) will nix your schedule and you'll be working junkyard duty where you belong.

Simply put: Cadillac your calls at every opportunity and enjoy the ride.



Scales of Justice

The “Scales” is a way to inform officials when they are conflicted over a situation at hand, apply the scales of justice to maintain your personal integrity and that of the game.

Player A has been blown-up by Player B while in a defenseless position. Player A has gone yard sale; everything’s on the lawn and his inability to recover to his feet has you concerned the local police might show up and outline his body in chalk.

Decision time: one, two, three minutes of time-served? Locked in? Ejection?

Easy call. Go heavy; minimum two minutes non-releasable if not more. Someone gives you gruff, it’s as easy as applying the Scales of Justice: “Coach that young man is done for the day; maybe the season. You’re guy is getting 3 minutes. I’m thinking the Scales of Justice have balanced in your favor.” Any argument after that.... They should tilt heavily the other way.

Can Crushers

Even with the many gotcha moments of the movie classic “Jaws”, one of my favorite scenes is when the nerdy oceanographer, Hooper (Richard Dreyfus), tries to throw down beverage with the crusty shark-hunting Captain Quint (the inimitable Robert Shaw) in the back of the boat. Hooper’s Styrofoam coffee cup is no match for Quint’s shot-gunning of a ‘Gansett followed by the crushing of aluminum in his crusty, callous, sea-faring paw.

The man can crush a can.

This is something I tell officials to avoid. Why go out and run around for 2-3 hours calling a game or games and make unnecessary or even ridiculous calls? Was some one’s safety affected? No? Then why’d you call that minor contact an illegal body check that led to a game-winning goal on a man-up? Did he cheat? Gain an unfair advantage? No? Then why take the ball away and start a wave of discontent from the crowd and from the sideline?

If calls of regret, calls that weren’t needed, or calls that started a wildfire during a serene situation that burned all your crew’s good work, chances are you’ll bending aluminum later that evening. Redeem yourself (and your empties) and avoid crushing cans.

One Man Band

It's quite the site to see 72 trombones marching down the street in a big parade, it's entirely something else when you're the Lead official on a fast break after a turnover at the top of the box or at midline and you're all pistons and gears as you break towards your goal that is about to be under attack. Typically you don't have time to think about where your partners are or may be as you streak to GLE.... But you should.

Chances are that on the flash-bang change of possession, your Trail (or Single Side) are essentially miles from where you and the action are taking place and may be as far back as the midline or maybe not even there yet. In this situation you are a One Man Band. You've got the shooter, you've got the crease, you've got the cage; you have got it all. All eyes are on you as you blow into a harp, knee-clang a set of symbols and foot-pump a snare drum, all while squeezing an accordion in harmonic measure.

Goal; whistle; late hit; flag, all followed by a need to insinuate yourself between aggrieved players in the post-goal/late-hit heat of the moment. Simply Google or You Tube the video clip of the closing minutes of this [year's Notre Dame/North Carolina game](#) and the epic fast break goal by ND and late hit that rocked the shooter into the pipe; that official had it all, he was a One Man Band and he performed like a maestro.



John "Biz" Bistowski

John started officiating lacrosse in 1999 in Eastern Massachusetts for the sole reason of staying in shape and sharpening his officiating skills for football. In the 17 years since, he transformed from a football official who did lacrosse on the side to a lacrosse official who did football on the side to a lacrosse-only official. John is the current President and Training Chair for the [San Diego County Lacrosse Officials Association](#).

He's had the privilege of officiating high school State championships in Massachusetts and California, NCAA playoffs, two MCLA national championship games, LXM Pro games, National Lacrosse League games, and most recently the North Carolina vs. Maryland Division 1 game played on the West Coast in March of 2015. John is also an active [LAREDO](#) Clinician for US Lacrosse.