

Being a Good Mentee

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When we talk about the mentor-mentee relationship, we often point out what it takes to be a good mentor. While certainly a worthwhile conversation, we can't neglect the other side of the relationship: What does it take to be a good student or mentee, when it comes to lacrosse officiating?

The number one thing you need to realize when you are a newer official and someone's mentee is that serious learning about officiating is an **active process**. Becoming a better official does not magically happen and fall on your lap, simply because you know good officials or hang around with good officials. You need to *"go get it."* That means a few different things to me.

Watch good officials work. With so many games on TV in this day and age, there are a lot of opportunities to see good officials work high level games. Make a few notes on what you saw in a particular game and then find an opportunity to ask questions. An experienced ref that is in it for the right reasons will have no problem fielding a phone call or email from a fellow official wanting to learn.

Don't limit yourself to one ref that you model. While you might have one specific person that you refer to as your mentor, a smart, newer official will tap into others to learn more and hear other points of view. For example: I consider Walt Munze my lacrosse reffing mentor. However, here's a partial list of guys that I learned a ton from over the past 25 years: Warren Kimber, Tom Abbott, Kevin O'Leary, Jim O'Hara, Terry MacNabb, Steve Miller, Terry Cullen & Jim Luchsinger. In addition to those eight guys that I just named, I have picked up tidbits from several other officials that I worked with or saw work.

Never stop improving and learning. A mentor-mentee relationship is one that doesn't just last a year or two. To this day, while driving home from a game, I'll talk on the phone to one or more of the guys I named above to get their opinion on something that might have happened in my game. I will be a better ref in this 2016 season than I was in 2015. I made mistakes last year in games that I learned from and won't make again. I will most likely make mistakes this year that I'll learn from and be better in 2017. The longer you are around, the more you will hear, see, and learn about unique situations that happen in a game. Sometimes they happen in games that you work and you have to learn to handle it on the fly. Other times, something weird happens in someone else's game that you can store in the back of your mind and be prepared if it should happen in a game that you work in the future.

Along the same lines as my previous point; **don't expect your mentor or mentors to be perfect.** You will see refs make mistakes that you consider to be our top guys. A good mentor isn't afraid to talk about the mistakes he's made with a newer official. In a perfect officiating world, several refs learn something when one ref makes a mistake. We are part of the human element of sport. Players, coaches and refs are all part of every game and each participant will most likely have things happen during a game that they would like to do over. Learn to accept that. Like other parts of your life; have a short memory, learn from your mistakes and challenge yourself to improve!