

13 Immutable Laws of Officiating



There is no sense in building an architectural masterpiece on a sand dune. The view might be great but it will be short-lived and very expensive. It might be part of our very nature that we have trouble admitting there are things we can't do.

After some years of pushing that boulder up various hills I came to realize there are certain immutable laws that define courses of action. I say that with reference to building a business, a relationship or a career in officiating. It is that latter undertaking to which I offer the following observations.

For my personal use I have so far identified **13 Immutable Laws of Officiating**:

1. The Law of Memory

The older you get, the better you were. Ever notice that with each telling of tales we become better and better officials? Memory is such a wonderful evaluation enhancer.

2. The Law of Respect

There are those who deserve receiving the benefit of the doubt from you. That is a "gift" to be earned not dispensed gratuitously.

3. The Law of Response

When asked a question, if you choose to answer, do so tightly. Don't answer a question for which you do not have credible information. Answer questions not statements.

4. The Law of Deference

Speak with courtesy. Your point will carry double its weight. If you are slapping them with your words, they can't be clearly heard.

5. The Law of Threats

Showdowns lead to show-ups. In either case you will come out on the short end. When you threaten someone, you bargain from the position of weakness.

6. The Law of Belief

Call it the way it is. There was a time when we could “call it the way we saw it.” Today that is found to be wanting. The justification of a call is now that you called it based on what you believe you saw. Replay/ review often serves as final arbiter.

7. The Law of Candor

Mistakes are made. The acceptance of that and the corollary of admittance and administration force you to humbleness. That is new territory for many.

8. The Law of Eavesdropping

When you put words into the digital realm, you own them.

9. The Law of Cleanliness

If you have to think whether something might be a conflict of interest, consider it so. One breath of scandal freezes much honorable sweat.

10. The Law of the Ladder

It is all about not making things worse. Seldom will you get the toughest, richest assignments because you scored 100 percent on your test. You will get them because the assigner/coordinator believes you will not make things worse.

11. The Law of Adaptation

When your horse dies, get off. If your approach to the game seems to result in less than satisfactory results, your methods have to change. You have to change before your results will change. You might believe that “others” have to do the changing. That is sort of like leaving a nightlight on for Jimmy Hoffa.

12. The Law of Ownership

You will be presumed arrogant. That is because you own the whistle. Powerful piece that whistle. Your words and deeds must always define a less arrogant you.

13. The Law of Wholeness

Every assignment is more than the game. It is a mosaic of responsibilities. With each piece of that mosaic comes the opportunity to enhance your stature as an official or exasperate those who are trying to rely on you. From acceptance/ confirmation through game-report filing, from arriving at the site to leaving the area, your professional, thoughtful best is required.

*** This article is a reprint of a Publisher's Memo by Referee Founder and Publisher Barry Mano.*