

The Care and Feeding of High School Sports Announcers

Thou Shall Not...

1. ..Use any profanity what so ever!

The accidental slip gets you in trouble. Many announcer has lost his job when he received a shock when touching a microphone to his lips as uttered, "G*\$ D*&^!" My advice to would be announcers is to eliminate any four letter words from your personal vocabulary. An announcer should be articulate enough to find a host of more appropriate words with which to communicate!

2. ...Make negative personal references.

Her friends and family may not consider what you think is a "cute" comment about you ex-girlfriend as such.

3. ...Make up funny names for players.

A name is a very personal thing, If it is the nickname they go by in the community that's fine.

4. ...Make disparaging remarks about the opponents.

"Trash talk" is for the locker room but not on the air. Even if your local cable serves only your school district, the relative of an visiting player may be watching.

5. ...Criticize the coaching staff (even if they are lousy.)

They have enough problems!

6. ...Make comments about people in the stands.

It is appropriate to mention the presence of "celebrities" such as the principal or the president of the school board. However, respect the privacy of the general public. If a teacher gave you a less than favorable grade on the last the test, the broadcast booth is not the place to tell the world. (Try studying harder!)

7. Emphasize player errors or show injured players

Remember that these are student players and announcers should refine from criticizing their mistakes. (If you do, they may explain it to you rather painfully on the loading dock after school!) "The defense was offside" will suffice rather than "Johnson jumped again!

During the heat of broadcast is usually not the appropriate time for "instruction." Use the IFB intercom for "gentle reminders" rather than long lectures. Instructors should take the time to analyze the tape of the event with the announcers in private to avoid embarrassing or humiliating them in front of their peers (no matter how much they may deserve it!)

Over (continued)

Points to Consider

1. Define the announcer's duties.

The sports announcing "team" usually consists of a "play by play" and "color" announcer. Ideally, the voices of the two announcers should be easily distinguishable by the audience. Novice high school students have the unfortunate tendency to be both the "play by play" and "color" announcer at the same time. They both try to describe the winning touchdown run and then comment on it. In the process, they "step" on each other, which distracts their train of thought and annoys the audience.

2. Remember this is television.

Novice announcers, tend to do a "radio" play-by-play, which would be fine, if this were radio. During a play, the play-by-play announcers should inform us of the player's name and the technical name of the play. They should also keep an eye on the monitor and tailor the commentary to compliment the visual image. Never, ever say, "As you can see on the screen!" Where else do you think the viewers will be looking?

3. Remember to give the Score

Channel surfers want to know the score. Most high school production facilities do not have the facilities for a continuous score graphics. If standard graphics are available, show a score graphics on a regular basis. If graphics are not available, the announcers should give the score at every break in the action or change of possession. For close basketball games, give the score at every other basket because most viewers are not doing the math.

4. Dress the part

Some believe that an announcer should be heard but not seen. Hopefully they will also receive a few minutes of on camera fame. This may take the form of a pre-game standup report from the field, an "announcer cam" in the booth or half time interviews. They need to understand that they not only represent themselves but also are public ambassadors for the school district.

Even if they never appear on camera, they should be recognizable as announcers by members of the school community who attend the games.

5. Be Prepared

Many high school announcers tend to "wing it" because this is how the professionals appear to do it. In reality, the pros have spent hours researching and rehearsing their introductions and "packages" within the show.

Halftime is not a time to run to the refreshment stand and party (and hope you make it back to the booth in time!) This time should be used to work on a summation of the first half and the intro to the second half.

Nothing says "unprepared" more than not knowing the players. Feel free to ask their coach for a team roster. However, do not ask for interviews on game day.

6. Do not rush you delivery

The ball is only in play for one quarter of the average football game and half of a basket ball game. There is plenty of time to comment on the proceedings. During many of the game's most exciting times, it is best to keep quiet and let the images and crowd noise tell the story.