



CORNY'S CORNER

It's About Time

Corny Galdones, February 2016

Time is money. Invest it well in times of import. Time off is all yours. Besides putting in time to study the rulebook, rules interpretations and nuances of the game in your spare time, feel free to have the time of your life devoid of disgrace. When it's crunch time however, how you spend your time has a major bearing over the course of time on whether you're considered small-time or big-time especially as a first referee.

In our pastime, time is too valuable to waste. Once lost, it's seldom recovered. Arrive ahead of time for a match. On time is late. You can't go wrong following this philosophy. Avoid being known to be tardy or show up in the nick of time. That's a strike against you. What's more, you'll be rushing around pressed for time.

Time is of essence particularly in tournaments. Do you take your sweet time starting and completing matches time after time, leaving the court behind time? Whoever is last to inherit the delay you created probably won't have time for you after being forced to work overtime past supertime, much less bedtime, while in the meantime you left at a decent hour, benefiting from finishing up on another court that others worked hard to keep on time. Have you no consideration? It's high time you reformed your mode of operation. Think of your fellow officials, not just yourself.

Managing a court during pre-match isn't limited to examining the net height, antenna placements and ball pressure. Rather than watching the clock or killing time, note conditions that could hold up the match, putting it behind schedule. Take care of every little detail without making a big deal about it or giving anyone a hard time. Is each playing side the correct dimensions? From time to time, it's been too short or too long. Are the required floor markings present? Are the team benches inside the attack zone, letting a coach sit in an improper area? Does the second referee have room to maneuver around the stanchions and scorer table? Are there obstructions or safety hazards? Are towels handy in case anything gets wet? The checklist goes on. As the saying goes, a stitch in time saves nine. It saves thine, too.

Start the warm-ups pronto. Every minute adds up. Still, starting early may be restricted. College coaches may be looking at players as well. Feel out the situation. Are all teams involved eager to get going? Is any player being recruited? Can you rock and roll without repercussions? During warm-ups, multitask. Be short and sweet in briefing the work team and checking for legality of uniforms, presence of jewelry and if required, accuracy of team rosters. At the same time, keep an eye on the setters, hitters and passers in their drills to gauge their skill level and surmise the teams' officiating expectations for the match.

Up on the stand, take advantage of the quiet time when the second referee verifies the team lineups to start a set. Police the court periphery and analyze each team. Who's the setter? What's the setter's court position? Who's opposite in rotation to the setter? Add as needed more keys to detect overlaps. Who's adjacent in rotation to the setter? Who are the front row players in service order? You can never have too much information. The more you employ and deploy sensibly, the better official you'll be.

Gather additional data as a player goes back to serve. Is a libero replacement taking place correctly? Is the receiving team ready? What's its passing formation? Is an overlap possible? Similarly, survey the serving team, its defensive setup and a potential screen or overlap. Is its server the correct player? Furthermore, are the line judges in place? Is the second referee tending to a match interruption? If it's a substitution, ascertain who's replacing whom in what court position. By the time the server reaches the back line and turns around to face you, your full court scan should be completed. Blow your whistle immediately and beckon for serve. Biding your time until you and everyone else are good and ready would put even a snail to sleep. Hurry without rushing. Pick up your pace. Energize the action. Keep the players hustling unless they're wards of Father Time. Before you know it, the match is done.

After beckoning for serve, make time to find the setter for each team. Be on your toes, especially on an overpass, for an illegal back row block or attack at the net by a back row setter. Run through your additional rotation inspections. Be done in time to view the service toss for a possible fault.

When play ensues, pretend your eyes are a camera snapping away all the time. Widen your field of vision when the ball is in flight. Narrow it as the ball is being played. Your eyes tracking a ball going up or coming down serves no purpose except when the ceiling becomes a factor. This chasing of the action neither captures premium snapshots nor buys time. Situate so the action comes to you instead. Get ahead of what could occur next by flashing your eyes forward to where the ball is headed, putting imaginary blinders above your eyes. In no time flat after (not during) an attack hit, center on the blockers' hands for the possibility of the ball deflecting off them. Most of the other times, you'll have time to discern the player movements and identify who might play the ball next, preparing you for the offensive and defensive actions that develop. Stop your lens before the ball is contacted to zoom in and focus on only the body surfaces actually touching the ball. Monitor the contact its entire time. Else, it's only a matter of time before you miss a vital call.

Standing the test of time, this visual routine mentally helps to slow time down, enabling you to adapt to the speed of the game and make split-second decisions on ball handling. Ignore efforts and outcomes unusual or ugly along with resultant spin or sound. Basically, the ball cannot be double contacted (*i.e.*, bobbled) except on the first contact of an attack, caught or thrown. Obtain a clear, timely picture every time then read and react. Timing is everything.

When a rally ends, confirm the scoreboard is current and the coaches have no issues. Oftentimes, a coach merely wants to know what happened. Communicate with subtle hand motions to convey what you saw from the stand. This may placate the coach. Then again, it may not, depending on the coach's mood. If you're given a bad time at any time, the coach may need a time-out in one form or another for the time being.

When the match is over, take time to examine the scoresheet even if you're racing against time. Verify at least the scores of each set, match winner and how many sets each team won before signing off on it. Sometimes, the results are missing or recorded wrong, causing heartburn all around. Save yourself the reprimand. Get it right. Finally, secure the game ball. It has legs.

Plenty of time is at your disposal in a match. Are you spending it wisely? Is your officiating prosperous or poor? Time will tell.