

To: VLOA Members

FM: George S. Cook

As much as I have been looking forward to address the membership face to face, I am unable to be present due to various changes. However: I have asked Keith Page to read my statement pertaining to concerns I have with the direction we are heading. My statement will no doubt offend many members and I am fully aware of the consequences I will suffer. If you know me it will not be sugarcoated. You will hear some things you don't want to hear.

Concerns:

1. The evaluation process that was designed to assist and improve officials performance appears to have been derailed. I am very frustrated in that I received only on formal request. I counted many day (games scheduled) in which I did not have a game to officiate and I was available to observe/evaluate. I did not receive any request to observe/evaluate. The question to the membership is, "do you want to improve?" If so, why is the membership sitting on their hands and being silent.
We have out of State officials "recruited" to officiate in Vermont. What is wrong with such picture, especially Playoffs. We have plenty of skilled officials within our ranks to officiate games. As an official, has anyone formally sat down with you and discussed your strengths and weaknesses, or how to improve your game and confidence? What has the organization done for you other than your schedule? Have you received any formal observation/evaluation to give you some tools to work with?
2. Officials who "ride" the coat tails of college officials and thinking they did a good job because the college official will, "take care" of the game. You are not providing the game the service in which you are getting paid for. Some officials cannot keep up with the pace of a Varsity game. Many appears to be out of shape and you appearance affects how you are viewed by players, coaches and spectators. Run with the game, not chase after the play. We need to improve positioning to make the call.
3. We have a core of members who know they will get a schedule and they do not have any incentive to become better. If those people were to be evaluated they will know what they need to do to improve and can be a mentor for younger officials coming up. Ask yourself, "how can I help VLOA?"
4. We are the only officiating organization that I know of that does not impose mandatory attendance at meetings. We could start and hold officials accountable and hopefully eliminate inconsistencies from one game to another. Coaches are accurate when they ask for consistencies.
5. We need and Organizational Chart. Evaluate all officials and use such process to assign officials games based on their capability that will be documented evaluation. A school recently requested a three man crew for a Semi-Final. Majority of VLOA are not qualified to be considered at this, therefore, only College officials or out of state officials can be assigned.

Where is the incentive for the majority of VLOA members to work hard only to be eligible to be considered for such assignment?

6. A past president was penalized quite heavily for attempting to initiate and implement a certification process for officials in VLOA. Although the members voted in favor of such certification a couple years later, the process has not been put into action. Let me give you a scenario to get you to think. A player is seriously injured. He suffers permanent disability. Family files a civil suit claiming the officials lacked training to officiate at this level (JV, Varsity, Recreation league, Youth tournament are examples) Parents attorney will go after the Refs, VLOA, Coach, School, and whoever associated with the contest. You will be asked, "have you ever received formal training," and what such training be? What are you going to say? Are you ready to obtain an attorney to defend yourself?

Recommendations:

1. Place the responsibility of assigning individuals for Evaluations to the Evaluators and out of the assignors jurisdiction. A copy of the Main Schedule is available to the evaluators.
2. Officials be placed into categories indicating the level of games he/she be assigned to, including playoff consideration.

Example: A- Preferred Officials

B – Supplemental A

C – Supplemental B

D – Alternate – Certified level 1 officials

3. Assignor to use the proposed example and held accountable by the executive board.
4. Add an "at large" member to be appointed to the executive board
5. Form an evaluation committee. The evaluators will also be held accountable for their duties.
6. All committees to meet once out of season and submit reports to the executive committee.
7. The President and VP to serve two years. Time enough to implement consistencies within VLOA organization.

In closing, I have been with VLOA since 1984 and have seen the organization grow. We spent time and great deal of energy in the development of VLOA. In recent years we have been in a stand still in reference to improving officials performance. This is mainly due to concerns stated above.

This statement was prepared hoping with it will increase your awareness. You need to get more involved. Speak up! And don't worry about not getting games for speaking up.

“You can’t hold a ref down without staying down with the ref”. Our organization has been impeding the potential growth of younger officials by denying them of the service of the organization agreed to.

Hope you had a season in which you learned more. VLOA has to be more active. Have a good summer there are plenty of camps you can go to improve your officiating. If you invest in officiating, the rewards will and can be measured.

“THERE ARE TWO WAYS OF EXERTING ONE’S STRENGTH: ONE IS PUSHING DOWN, THE OTHER IS PULLING UP.”