



INFORMATION FOR PLAYERS, COACHES AND PARENTS

The Sharks Basketball Club is very proud to say that it is one of the major basketball development clubs of the Basketball Geelong competition. Not only do we develop our players with a range of training and playing options, but we also have vast resources available for our coaches to call upon for assistance.

One thing that is not widely known is that the Club has one of the highest ratios of junior referees per player within the competition. This is something that we should be very proud of, and something that other Clubs should aspire to. The referee stocks within our Club, is not only measurable in available numbers, but also in the quality of those referees. This has been evident in the number of our Club referees being given the opportunity to officiate at major events, such as the Southern Cross Challenge, Australian Junior Country Basketball Cup and Country Championships. This is a just reward for those who have put in many hours in the search of excellence.

However, an improvement in the standards of behaviour within our sport, to provide a better environment for our officials and indeed all volunteers, is needed for them to be able to participate and enjoy our game.

Snapshot of referee issues and workload within the sport:

- Many larger Associations need to fill up to 400 game positions each week with referees and many medium sized Associations, up to 200 games – as officials tire or our many students commit to exams, there is an increase in the amount of games that are done with one referee.
- Many of our officials are doing up to 4 or 5 games a night to meet the needs of our playing members.
- Many junior referees will not move to senior nights – if made to move many just drop out rather than face irate adults in senior competitions.
- As players detest playing late games, imagine the pressure on a young referee who has probably not had a meal or toilet break, and then just like a player, gets to bed just before midnight; probably to wake up next day and front up to school.
- The pressure that is applied to young referees to 'do just one more game because we are really short'; this is usually the game that an incident flares.
- The issues we are facing are state wide problems and indeed apply to most sports.
- The vast majority of our referees are juniors, often in their first job. Most are only 14 - 15 and looking for pocket money. Many move to other jobs at 16yrs where they are not faced with the constant criticism and challenges to decisions from adults and juniors.
- We have a lack of good mentor referees for the 16 – 21 age-groups. And many of those that are mentoring do not have the skill set that is required to deal with adolescent teenagers.
- Burnout and lack of enjoyment are critical issues.

- Many Associations and Referee Associations acknowledge that the young age of our officials and their short time in the game means they can lack game appreciation and knowledge. They also lack maturity as officials and the ability to effectively communicate with adults.
- Many of our senior referees are experienced and knowledgeable but in having to do 4 - 5 games per night they cannot maintain the standard that they and we want and you expect.
- **Players, spectators and coaches must accept the facts as they are and not bully, threaten or intimidate referees. This type of behaviour only makes the problem significantly worse.**

Types of Conflict and Confrontation our officials face:

- **Abusive** – verbal and invading personal space.
- **Sarcastic** – playing up to the crowd and belittling officials.
- **Expert advice** – trying to put your experience (loosely defined) onto young inexperienced shoulders or on to officials completing their last game in a long night, just so your team can play.
- **‘I have been involved in basketball for 20 years’** – and I am sure that the Association would welcome your support and guidance of young referees at any time, through the correct channels.
- **Questioning** – continuous – all game every game – wears thin after 3 or 4 games. You may be the 4th coach to spend the entire game on the referees case, rather than coaching – then they may snap.
- **Adult v Child**
 - Don't expect teenagers to be rational or to have a mature discussion with an adult – often an adult who is out of control to some degree.
 - We expect too much of our juniors – understand that they are inexperienced, their knowledge base is still evolving and their appreciation of the game is also just developing.
 - We also expect too much of our juniors in a maturity sense as well. Those who have teenage sons/daughters will know of the problems, concerns and difficulties with just growing up in today's society. But when they pull on a black and white shirt, we expect them to act and behave above and beyond the 'normal' level expected within their age range.
- **Being nice** whilst doing any of the above does not help – you still wear them down.

Key Issues that need to be agreed to:

The Sharks Basketball Club would like to assist our junior referees in achieving the highest recognition that they aspire to, but more importantly enjoying the game of basketball.

The Club recognises the valuable contribution that these young people have in the games of basketball that we play each and every week and would expect that the members of our Club were setting a level of example that other Clubs would follow. But for this to happen, we would require our players, coaches and parents to set that example.

1. All players, coaches and parents are to read, understand and abide by the relevant Basketball Victoria Codes of Conduct. Lead by example.
2. If you see one of the junior referees in some difficulty, please take the time to ensure that they are all right. A reassuring pat on the back may be all that they need.
3. Make sure that as a player, coach or parent you are not the person that others are talking about – for the wrong reasons.
4. Accept that due to a number of reasons, referees are going to make mistakes. This does not make them bad, useless or biased; it reinforces and confirms that they are young humans.