

Dear Parents:

I am a Gold Crown Rules Coach. You call me “Ref” or “Stripes”, which is fine. I am privileged to have the chance to be an official for your son or daughter’s game.

I wanted to take a minute to explain more about the job I perform, and hopefully shatter a few myths.

First, I do this because I enjoy basketball. There may be a handful of us that just show up and collect a set of game fees, then go home. But I would say 98% of us enjoy the game, and want to do something positive for young people. That’s the reason I do it. I remember starting as an official in Chicago at age 16. It kept me off the streets and out of trouble, and it grew into a way to give back to the community.

I don’t care who wins the game – It matters not who wins or who loses the game that your child is playing. I’m there to enforce the rules and enforce good sportsmanship. I want your child to have fun and learn not only about the game, but about life too. A very basic part of life is sometimes, despite your best effort, you don’t come out on top. I know you want your son or daughter to win every game they play, and that’s fine. I’m a dad, and I want my daughter to win at whatever she does too. However, she, like your child, needs to know what it’s like to not get the win, and how to handle it. It’s just a game, but it can teach valuable lessons.

Why aren’t you calling “X”? - Because I probably didn’t see it, or saw it differently than you. The expectation of officials in sport is that we start out perfect and get better as we go. The reality is that we are human and make mistakes. The AFC and NFC title games in the NFL last Sunday are prime examples of that. I don’t like making mistakes, and, in some rare instances, you may have a better angle on a play from your seat in the stands than what I have on the court. But I certainly didn’t deliberately not call something because I have it out for your child or their team. Remember, I don’t care who wins.

You’re so busy worrying about us or the coaches that you aren’t calling the game! – In some cases, that is unfortunately true. I can’t accept poor and unsporting conduct from anyone, coaches, players, or fans/parents. I’m human, not robotic. Think of it this way. How would you like an angry customer or boss/co-worker standing on your desk, or within a few feet of you at your work or office berating you, sometimes at maximum volume, for every decision you make because it was wrong in their mind? Well, the basketball court is my office. Remember that next time you want to scream about a call.

How you can help – Cheer for your child. Encourage them. If you have a question about the rules of the game, ask. No need to yell about how horrible you feel I am because of a call or no-call that didn’t go your team’s or child’s way. It’s youth basketball, not the NCAA or NBA Finals. Study the rules. There are plenty of online resources for that. For example, did you know that your child can run or dive and go to the floor for a loose ball, and if their momentum from the run/dive makes them slide, no matter how far, it’s NOT traveling? Or, if a player dribbles the ball above shoulder height, so long as their hand stays on top of or on the side of the ball, it’s NOT a carrying or illegal dribble violation?

I want to enjoy helping your child have fun and learn the game of basketball. Please remember that it’s only a game, and that people like me in the striped and gray shirts are doing the best we can for all involved.

Regards,

A Gold Crown Rules Coach