

USAV NTR Officials Division
Education and Training Committee

2016-2017 Rater's Handbook

Evaluations and Ratings in the NTR

The past few USAV seasons have seen a significant shift in how the North Texas Region's referees are evaluated and trained. This is partly due to the changing role of the head referee, who has traditionally served as a representative of the region, but is now typically being paid by a tournament to additionally serve as a site director. This change is also possible due to an increase in the number of working officials; with more referees available to officiate matches, the region has the flexibility to assign dedicated evaluators who can provide feedback to the uniformed officials.

Evaluations Conducted by Head Referees

With the tournament directors footing the bill for dual-role head referees/site directors, their primary concern is that the event runs smoothly at each location. After scheduling referees, posting scores, answering coach and parent questions, updating online result systems, addressing problems with work teams, and handling protests and conduct issues, there isn't much time left for these individuals to formally evaluate referees!

Realistically, though, as part of their many duties, head referees will inevitably watch matches being played, and will have feedback (whether positive or constructive) for the uniformed officials. While no rating form should be filled out, it's a good idea to jot down any noteworthy occurrences.

Sometime before each referee leaves for the weekend, briefly mention your observations (see "*Debriefing the Referee*" below for some hints and guidelines). Encourage the official to ask questions; this is an opportunity for them to improve a little bit each time they work.

Evaluations Conducted by Paid Observers

Nowadays, most of our true, full-match evaluations will be performed by a paid observer assigned to a facility. This individual will have no administrative duties at the tournament site other than evaluating referees. Paid observers are compensated by the half-day and are expected to produce as many quality evaluations as practical, typically 4 evaluations per 6-match wave.

Evaluations performed by a paid observer should be full-match evaluations where possible. If the rating form used allows for it, it's also a good idea for the observer to assign scores to each of the categories. These matches are a great opportunity to watch items like consistency of ball handling judgment, match tempo, and interaction with the participants/work team that are harder to observe when stopping by a court to watch a few rallies at a time.

Make every effort to debrief the referee on their next match off, if time allows. At the very least, find some time during the weekend to provide feedback – your observations aren't worth much if you don't share them! While trying to strike a balance between positive and critical comments, be sure to fully explain any areas where the referee seems to need significant work, or where they visibly struggled during the match.

Standards for Evaluators

Your role as an evaluator places you in a significant position of authority. You are responsible for critiquing fellow officials who frequently view you as their peer, regardless of the difference in your ratings. With this power comes great responsibility – the responsibility to ensure you always have the best interests of the officials and the region in mind.

Here are some points of emphasis for your conduct as an evaluator.

Be both a speaker of words
and a doer of deeds.

Lucky Numbers 25, 26, 6, 50, 18, 12

Ethical Standards

- Never use your power for personal gain. Some positive side effects of evaluating include a deeper understanding of the game, opportunities to observe participant behavior when not directly involved in the match, learning from how others handle situations, the chance to improve your communication skills, and an overall increase in the skills of our region's officials. However, if you expect something else in return, such as better/more assignments, a chance to belittle others, or an opportunity to prop up your own ego, you're clearly doing it for the wrong reasons.
- Be neutral and honest. When debriefing the official, speaking to another evaluator, or recording your comments on a rating form, describe your observations without embellishment or sarcasm.
- Never demean a referee, regardless of the magnitude of their errors. If there is a significant issue that needs to be addressed immediately, inform the head referee or contact the Officials Coordinator. If there is an ethical concern, thoroughly document the situation and forward it to a member of the Officials Division Board of Directors. Evaluators should also be aware of the **United States Olympic Committee's SafeSport program**, and how it is implemented in the NTR.
- Always correct officials in private. Exercise caution when speaking in mixed company – be careful not to criticize an official in front of a coach, site director, or spectators. Likewise, do not share the contents of your evaluation with anyone at the site other than the head referee. It's OK to use a referee as an anonymous example (*e.g.*, "there was another referee today who made the same mistake as you"), but avoid calling out an official by name.
- Keep a low profile. Don't advertise that you're evaluating officials – unless you want coaches and spectators looking to see if you're writing after every close play! If you *are* asked what you're doing, briefly explain your role at the event, as many attendees aren't aware that there is a referee training program in place.
- Avoid any appearance of impropriety. The same items that would sink you as a referee – showing bias for/against a team, sexual remarks or innuendo, inappropriate behavior, failure to maintain composure – are grounds for removal from future consideration as an evaluator.

Professional Standards

- When working as a paid evaluator at a site, let the head referee do their job. Your role is not to handle protests or behavioral issues, set ground rules, or answer questions about the tournament format. The head referee is in charge of the officials, including preparing the officials' schedules. You are simply there to evaluate their performance. **DO NOT INTERVENE IN A MATCH IN ANY WAY!**
- Understand the impact of your words. Your personality probably gravitates towards one area of the "positive – neutral – negative" spectrum, but your demeanor and choice of words must be flexible depending on the referee with whom you are working, and on their experience level.
- Do the work that is expected of you. Doing good evaluations is time-consuming and mentally tiring. When working as a rater, you are being paid to evaluate officials, so follow through on this

expectation. Enter your completed evaluations online in a timely manner, preferably within 48 hours of the end of the tournament.

- Come prepared. You will need some of the region's evaluation forms or some USAV/PAVO Rating Sheets (both available on the NTR website), writing utensils, a notebook, and a watch. You should always have your DCR, the latest rule interpretations, and a case book as well.
- Dress professionally. As a general rule, the same attire that is appropriate for a head referee is acceptable for a paid evaluator. USAV or NTR apparel is a plus. Do not evaluate in your uniform.
- Stay current. Know what rules and techniques are being taught, and know WHY they are being taught that way. If you aren't sure of the correct rule or proper technique, don't just guess – if you're wrong, and another evaluator contradicts you later, it makes us all look bad. There's no shame in saying "that's a good question, I don't know but I will find out and get back to you". Then follow through.
- Distinguish between "the only right way" and "my personal preference". For rule interpretations and some techniques, there is only one correct answer. In other cases, there will be some variance between officials in how they handle a situation. If you're telling a referee how you would handle a situation, but it's not the only acceptable way, be sure to clearly state that.

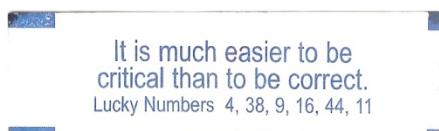
Debriefing the Referee

OK, you've completed the easy part – watching the match and recording your observations. How do you describe those observations to the referee in a way that is enlightening rather than discouraging?

Your conversation with the referee is an opportunity for you to help improve their officiating. You are there to **teach**, not to **preach**. If the first comment you have for the referee is how poorly they did, it will put them on the defensive and make them non-receptive to your suggestions, no matter how good.

To effectively communicate your message, you must understand your audience. A brand-new USAV official doesn't need a 3-page treatise on everything they did wrong, and considering that many of them have never been evaluated, it would be inappropriate to point out their lack of ability. On the other hand, gently pointing out only the minor flaws of a candidate won't adequately prepare them (technically or emotionally) for the stress of being critiqued by members of the National Rating Team.

When evaluating less-experienced referees, you must lead the debriefing from beginning to end. Start with one or two positive items – even if it's as simple as a well-pressed, professional-looking uniform.



Then choose two or three general areas that need improvement and will be easy for the referee to address. If you observe any major occurrences (such as sanctions, protests, or misapplication of rules), be sure to address those as well, even

if they were handled correctly. Don't cloud the discussion with advanced techniques or philosophical commentary – stick to the basics (*e.g.*, mechanics, time management, judgment that is called differently from NFHS) that will lead to the quickest improvements. Lastly, it never hurts to end on a positive note!

For more experienced referees, you might ask them for a brief self-evaluation – just a sentence or two about how they thought the match went. Their answer will tell you if their view of the match differs significantly from yours, and then you can focus on correcting those items where their perception does not match your observations. Cover 4-6 of the observations you made; these can be general comments or can refer to a specific call/no-call. Ask the referee if there is anything they didn't understand. Oh, and speaking of asking questions...

Regardless of the level of the official being evaluated, do not tolerate dissent during your debriefings. You are the teacher, they are the student, and you should be afforded the respect that comes with that position of authority. One phrase commonly heard at national events is that the debriefing is a “monologue, not a dialogue”: the rater speaks, the referee listens, and there is no debate. Questions that are intended to clarify what you said are acceptable; statements or disagreements that challenge what you’ve presented (even if in the form of a question) are not.

Using the NTR Referee Rating Form

Assigning Scores

If you choose to use the NTR Referee Rating Form, you can optionally assign scores for each of the seven main categories. It's only necessary to record a score for the main categories; if you feel that one of the items listed underneath a category needs to be addressed, note your comment in the right half of the form. Do not score every line individually, score only the main categories.

First Referee	Second Referee	Observations of Performance as First Referee (R1)
N 1 2 3 4 5	N 1 2 3 4 5	During coin toss, catch and reveal – do not flip over Gather your work crew early in the warm-up to make sure you have somebody for every position Excellent whistle reaction time Whistle is difficult to hear when gym is noisy – blow LOUDER.
N 1 2 3 4 5	N 1 2 3 4 5	

Use the “N” option for a category if you do not observe any applicable items and can’t assign a score. This is common for “Match Protocol” as it consists of pre-match duties that often occur before you arrive at the court.

For the remaining categories, assign the scores “1” through “5” using the following guidelines. All scores are relative to the official’s current rating.

1 – Poor. The official’s performance was significantly below expectations for their rating. Some examples applicable to all ratings: complete lack of decisiveness on judgment calls, or allowing coaches and spectators to influence decisions; failing to use the correct USAV signal sequence; very slow whistle reaction time; or consistently allowing interruptions and pre-match periods to extend beyond their allotted time.

2 – Fair. The official’s performance was slightly below expectations for their rating. Some examples, regardless of the official’s rating: lack of consistency or frequent missed judgment calls; lack of communication with officiating team; lack of whistle strength; or mechanics that are sloppy or difficult to interpret.

3 – Average. The official’s performance was average for their rating. Assume a referee’s score for a category is average, unless you observe situations that would raise or lower the score. If you do not observe any situations in a match that pertain to a specific category, use the “N” option.

4 – Good. The official’s performance was above expectations for their rating. The referee demonstrated a level of competence for this category, although they were not necessarily perfect.

5 – Excellent. The official’s performance was significantly above expectations for their current rating. This means there were few or no errors observed in this category during the match, or the referee did an exceptional job for someone of their level.

Totaling Scores

Total the referee’s scores and average them, ignoring any categories where there was an “N”. For example, scores of “N”, “3”, “2”, “3”, “3”, “3”, “3” would be $17/6 = 2.8$.

Recommend for Advancement

Circle whether or not you feel the official should be considered for advancement to the next rating level. Base your decision only on the comments you recorded for this match, and not on previous evaluations of the official.

Capable Ages and Other Comments

Make a note with your opinion of the oldest juniors age group the referee is capable of working. You will record this information in the online evaluation system, which will help the region staff to assign referees to the appropriate level of play. Also, if you have any other comments (e.g., the referee was disrespectful or argumentative during the debriefing, or the referee is really good/really bad for their current level), please note those as well so we can track and address them.

Best Practices for Recording Your Comments

While looking at an official's scores can provide an overview of their performance during the match, the main purpose of the rating form is to record the evaluator's observations. The comments you record serve as feedback for the official (via the duplicate yellow form), as well as providing information to the Advancement Committee, Education and Training Committee, and the referee assigners.

Your observations will be more easily understood and implemented when you use positive action language – describe what SHOULD be done to fix the problem, rather than describing the problem itself.

Problematic: Don't put hands of "out" signal at eye level [*Don't think of a pink elephant*]

Problematic: "Out" signal needs work [*OK, what about it needs to be fixed?*]

Better: "Out" signal too low [*Good, now we know what's wrong...*]

Best: "Out" signal should be higher – arms parallel to floor, elbows at 90 degrees [*Great! Describes what needs to be fixed, as well as a cue for how to fix it*]

One "best practice" is to record comments so they can be understood by someone who wasn't watching the match. Comments like "XYZ is bad/was wrong/needs to be fixed" need cues on HOW to implement that change. Although you may go into more detail during your debriefing, other people who read the form will not know the nature of the problem. Additionally, when the official refers back to the form at a later date, they may be unable to remember the clarification you provided.

Capabilities Based on Referee's Current Rating

VolleyballRefTraining.com lists some minimum criteria for referees at the Provisional and Regional levels. Those suggestions have been combined with the NTR's expectations for officials to come up with the following list of capabilities. You can use these as a starting point when providing feedback to a referee, whether they are maintaining their rating or attempting to achieve their next patch.

A Provisional Referee should...

- Wear the proper uniform
- Use the correct signal sequence
- Know basic signals (LOR, in/out/touch, protocol)
- Whistle as soon as the ball is out of play
- Whistle loudly enough to stop play
- Know the basic rules regarding the libero position

A Regional Referee should...

- Exhibit good time management
- Know all signals and use good mechanics
- Differentiate between a catch and a double contact
- Know how and when to transition as R2
- Capably instruct the work team of their duties
- Have a basic knowledge of the scoresheet
- Overrule support officials when incorrect
- Know and correctly apply back-row player rules
- Know and correctly apply position fault rules

A Junior National Referee should...

- Display excellent signal mechanics
- Apply judgment consistently throughout the match
- Apply judgment appropriate to the level of play
- Maintain an even match tempo
- Warn or sanction misconduct when appropriate
- Protect all members of the work team
- Exhibit good court awareness
- Demonstrate a concern for participants' safety
- Competently perform in the position of R2
- Recognize and fix errors on the scoresheet
- Correctly keep score without disrupting match tempo

A National Referee should...

- Know and apply rules, interpretations, and techniques
- Understand the spirit of the rules and their rationale
- Apply judgment consistently from match to match
- Focus on the appropriate item(s) during play
- Communicate effectively with their partner
- Use only rules and techniques applicable to USAV
- Handle all situations with professionalism
- Exhibit a calm demeanor with an air of competence
- Avoid the appearance of partiality or impropriety