

## Are You a Dictator or Facilitator?

The late Bill Klem, perhaps the greatest umpire in the history of baseball, was once shown a photo that supposedly proved he blew a call.

"Gentlemen," the old arbiter replied, "he was out because I said he was out."

That was the sort of stance officials had to take in those days or they likely wouldn't have survived in the game. Times have changed.

Oh, sure, there are still times when the iron fist that Klem and his brethren employed with regularity is needed. Depending on the game situation and circumstances, it can benefit an official to take a hard line. More often, though, these days the best officials are less dictators than facilitators. "We want to manage the game" is the phrase of the day.

Does the following description sound like someone you know?

**The dictator.** Like any general personality type, nobody will fit the bill perfectly as a dictatorial-type. There may be aspects of a person's personality that lean toward a dictatorial-type but other aspects do not. With that qualifier in mind, officials who lean toward a dictatorial-type personality most likely possess the following characteristics:

- **They control the game to their tempo** — they want things to unfold or evolve to their own accord or pace, as opposed to the natural flow of the game that comes from the players.
- **They refuse to treat athletes and coaches with respect** — they view themselves as the king of the jungle and they are the boss. It's that old, "This is my game!" mentality.
- **They act like fascists** — they believe they are the law and literally act like police officers gone overboard. Basically, their sense of authority crosses into authoritarianism, even totalitarianism.
- **They are poor communicators** — they refuse to listen to input offered by partners, assistants, linesmen, athletes and coaches.



Scott Fetterly, Renton, Wash., shares a light moment with a player during a recent high school game.

- **They "always" make perfect calls** — they believe all of their calls are the right calls. Even when they make mistakes, they refuse to admit to them.
- **They enjoy the chorus of boos** — they bask in the chorus of boos because that's when they are receiving as much attention as the athletes.

Reading that list, did you see yourself possessing any of those qualities? Don't worry too much if you see yourself only periodically in one or two of those categories. After

all, there are times when we love it when they boo, and who is a perfect communicator all the time? But if you see a lot of yourself in that list, it might be time to make a minor tune-up on your attitude or make a major overhaul on your officiating attitudes.

**The facilitator.** So what is a better way to approach officiating? Currently, the most popular and effective "style" is to employ a facilitator-type personality. That's embodied by the notion that officials are there to manage the