

COMMISSIONER'S CORNER



The Technological Evolution



For the last several months, as has been the case with many of you, I have both had and heard conversations about the role of social media, the prevalence of technology and the often negative effect of both on society. While we can look on our various social media accounts and see the division their content can sometimes cause, we can look a bit closer to home and see how technology can be used as a unifier and as a means of staying together when that truly is our only option. We can also look at it as a growth opportunity instead of a “necessary evil.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic first took over our lives in March, we had to figure out a way to connect with our officials. Fortunately, we had some of our own membership who jumped in with both feet and started the first webinar meeting curriculum in the country in the sport of football. Our office knew that in order to keep members engaged and connected with the NMOA and with each other, we had to ride the wave of technology, quickly.

The prospect of such a heavy reliance on technology had me feeling a bit tentative because of my own shortcomings in this arena. I know enough about it to get by but would not consider myself a “techie” by any stretch of the imagination. While I was ready to maybe dip my toes in the shallow water, I have an assistant in Nate who wanted to dive in head first off of the highest platform. His confidence made me realize that we could do it and that we could provide a means for our office to continue to get our messages out AND to continue to have a meaningful connection and relationship with our officials. In the past six months, our office has hosted dozens of webinars in various sports and have sat in on dozens of others. We have gotten to spend quality time with over 1,000 officials in our state and thousands more from across the country. Even though we aren’t together, we have been able to maintain engagement with our officiating family.

This all made me start to look back at the technological evolution I have personally witnessed since joining the NMAA staff in 1997. We have gone from paper registration forms, contracts from a dbase program on a Spinwriter printer on three-ply forms, actual letters sent via USPS and receiving game film on VCR tapes to online registration, online officials’ assignments, emails and Hudl. While those changes were gradual, what we have had to do in terms of an online State Clinic and online meetings has been accelerated and at seemingly warp speed in some areas. The good news is that we have all evolved and we have all survived to this point and we will continue to do so in the progression of technology.

While some officials have loved the change to more technology – online meetings, online rulebooks, online clinics, social media officials’ forums – others have been a little bit less comfortable with the change. We know that change is an emotional experience for us all and that change signifies a loss to some, be it a loss of tradition or a loss of the way we knew how to do things. There is always resistance to change, especially when change is rapid and many things are shifting at the same time. The process of adapting to change occurs in phases, with denial in the beginning and ultimately acceptance, with a whole bunch of steps in between.

We have loved the opportunity to really interact with our officials on the various webinars we have had over the past six and a half months. It has not only been an opportunity for me (a self-proclaimed paper and pen gal) to interact with officials from across the state, to see your smiling faces and to deliver messages to our membership, but it has also provided an opportunity to get out of my comfort zone and learn something new. Having an assistant who is teetering on the category of “millennial” has given me the ability to learn from him and to allow him to teach me and to teach officials how to use technology to make our lives more efficient and to keep us connected in a way that was not possible before.



I know the process has been frustrating in some ways, especially to those who are being forced out of their comfort zones. I encourage you to take this opportunity to learn something new and to embrace and accept the challenges of continuing to grow and continuing to educate yourselves. This is what I have had to do in my position and I am grateful for this "forced opportunity." I think about the way students are learning, how teachers are teaching and how parents are intimately involved in this process to a higher degree than they ever have been. If they can adapt in their role in education, so can we, in the officiating family.

What I have learned the most is to not be afraid to ask questions. Ask us. Ask your family members. Ask officials who are more tech-savvy than you are. To the officials who are technologically gifted, this is your time to step up and be a leader, to offer your wisdom and to be able to mentor your mentor in some cases. While a 25-year veteran may be the person we turn to for rules and mechanics advice, a first year official may have EXACTLY the skill set needed to help others through this process. This is another way technology can help to build relationships and to give people the opportunity to shine in officiating. I believe we all become more successful in any facet of our lives by not only knowing our strengths but from knowing what our weaknesses are and finding a way to learn and improve.

As social media entrepreneur, Matt Mullenweg said, "*Technology is best when it brings people together.*" I have been able to witness first-hand ways we can use the technology available to us to not only keep our Association together but to also connect us across the country with people with whom we may have never connected under "normal" circumstances. Officiating evolves and changes, just as technology does. Officiating brings people together, just as technology can. The way it was is not always going to be the way it is in any facet of our life, so revel in the fact that you get to witness these changes and you will grow in ways you never imagined.

Warm regards,

Dana Mappas

"Continuity gives us roots. Change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights"
-Pauline R. Kezer-



Important Dates (October-December, 2020)



October 2020

October 1, 2020 – Spirit Officials Registration Due/Exams Open*

October 10, 2020 – Cross Country, Golf, Volleyball Competition Begins*

October 16-17, 2020 – Spirit Coaches/Officials Clinic (Zoom)*

October 19-23, 2020 – Volleyball Coaches Appreciation Week*

October 26-30, 2020 – Volleyball Officials Appreciation Week*

October 28, 2020 – NMOA Executive Board Meeting (Zoom)

Note: The NMOA Executive Board Meeting is open to any members wishing to attend. If you have items you would like to place on the agenda for the consideration of the Board, please email them to danamarie@nmact.org no later than October 21, 2020.

October 30, 2020 – Volleyball Officials Exam Closes*

November 2020

November 16, 2020 – Spirit Officials Exam Closes*

November 25-27, 2020 – NMAA Office Closed (Thanksgiving Break)

December 2020

December 4-5, 2020 – NMAA State Volleyball Quarterfinals and NMAA State Cross Country

December 8-12, 2020 – NMAA State Volleyball Semifinals and Finals

December 15, 2020 – Basketball, Swimming & Diving Officials' Registration Due/Basketball Exams Open*

December 18-19, 2020 – NMOA Baseball & Softball State Clinic (Online)

December 21, 2020 – January 1, 2021 – NMAA Office Closed (Winter Break)

December 23, 2020 – NMOA Swimming & Diving Officials Clinic (Online – 5:30 PM)

December 30, 2020 – NMAA Basketball, Swimming & Diving District Clinics (Online – 5:30 PM & 7:00 PM)