

(Approved at the VBRA November 2013 Board Meeting)

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Subject: Social Network Sites

We currently live in an age where technology allows Immediate access to friends and family through social networks like Facebook, My Space and the like which make it possible to share with everyone immediately what you're doing, where you are and what your thoughts are on things and on many levels it is a great way of keeping up with what's going on with friends and family. What is potentially concerning about the use of Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and other social networking sites by people involved in basketball and, in particular, refereeing is that these sites may been used to bully other referees, to criticise referees and/or referee coaches and to make racist or sexist remarks about other participants. This sort of behaviour is totally unacceptable in basketball and basketball refereeing and will not be tolerated.

These networks can create situations that can bring both the user and those who read it down. Voicing opinions that bring disrespect to others in a public forum can only be harmful to those who write those opinions and to those they are directed at. In recent times there is much talk in the media about "cyber bullying". This is a new phenomenon but it can be and has proven to be just as hurtful as any other form of traditional bullying. And bullying isn't always about the bigger kid picking on the smaller kid.

Behind a computer screen, it is easy for that little kid to feel empowered and say something negative and/or derogative about someone bigger than them.

Having an opinion about others is fine and in no way should anyone be restricted what they say - as long as it comes with the respect of others.

What is concerning with these social pages is how these kinds of comments can be perceived on these social pages. For example, if someone has had a negative experience in a game or perhaps there is a clash of personalities and they decide to air their opinion in a negative light and without recourse for the person they are directing their opinions at, then they expose themselves to the ramifications that come with that.

Many of the remarks are being made with the posters believing that because those remarks can only be seen by people they have accepted as friends on their pages, they will not be made public. However, fortunately, there are enough decent people around who bring this behaviour to the attention of the League and myself. This occurs even when the posts are made by friends because those people recognise the harm and distress this sort of behaviour can generate.

Officiating any sport is a demanding, unforgiving pursuit where the negatives far outweigh the positives. It requires a thick skin and a great deal of intestinal fortitude to withstand the criticism and, at times, destructive comments which emanate from the fans and the media. There are mechanisms in place for referees to deal with unacceptable behaviour from players and coaches during games. But it is a different ball game when it comes to the public and the media.

However, when criticism and derogatory comments comes from within your own ranks, it becomes divisionary and disruptive and only serves to erode the teamwork that is so important in officiating to the highest level possible.

It is cancerous and those who actively engage in this practice have no place in refereeing even at the domestic level.

There is a basic fundamental that transcends any rules and regulations that are in place - respect for others. Respect comes in all forms, including expressing an opinion that others might not agree with but is expressed with respect for those it is directed at. If this fundamental aspect of life is not adhered to, then they face any ramifications which may arise as a result of their actions.

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pat Crowe".

Pat Crowe
VBRA Referee Administrator

NOTE:

This document was created by Peter Carey (NBL & WNBL Referee Manager) and forwarded to all NBL & WNBL Referees.