

# *Team Behavior at Home, on the Road, in the Plant, at the Contest and After the Contest*

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## **Introduction**

While judging teams do not have the visibility of athletic teams at our universities, adverse publicity of teams or individual team members would have a devastatingly negative impact on our program. This is especially true in this time of tightening budgets with university administrators questioning every activity. Regardless of how well we document the benefits of a judging experience, the bad publicity resulting from a thoughtless act may be the single factor causing loss of departmental or college support. Of all the lessons learned through competitive team activities, discipline, including behavior, is among the most lasting and the most valuable.

North Dakota State University (NDSU) is somewhat unique in that we still use faculty as judging team coaches; and both the livestock and meat team coaches have had more than 25 teams (acknowledgment to the University of Illinois as the other school that can make this claim). This length of tenure for the coaches has a distinct affect on discipline and team behavior. We have established rules and modified them over the years. A new coach (or graduate student) will most likely find that students need to test the coach's ability to interpret or enforce existing rules. The new coach may have the benefit of tradition, but students will likely need to verify that rules are being interpreted the same compared to the last coach. NDSU students no longer need to "test" us as often; just a quick check to see if the results match our reputation.

It is important that the rules are simple, easily understood, appropriate and that consequences for breach of these rules are clearly defined. Generally, the test of class discipline begins with placing of classes and cut assignment. Any equivocation

at this point is an indication that the coach can be manipulated and a certain degree of respect has been lost. Class control diminishes; this is a setup for behavioral problems later on. A coach's decisions must be based on accepted fact and must be defensible. Arbitrary or capricious decisions, ones made without due consideration, must be avoided. Discussion must be encouraged, argument disallowed. This testing of the coach is necessary. It is "hands on" student experimentation. They will test and evaluate results. The coach's response must be positive, immediate, and consistent. This "feedback" is a valuable learning process. Whether as a coach you agree with the best judging prospect or the poorest, the response must be consistently predictable by the students.

College student misbehavior is primarily a rebellion against authority. Forcing compliance with rules through fear of reprisal will work on the timid student, but these are probably not the ones who make up the best judging team. When the Bible speaks of the "fear of the Lord" it refers to "awe, reverence". By definition "reverence" is a feeling of deep respect. We fear in the biblical sense because we respect; we obey because we do not wish to disappoint those whom we respect or, conversely those who respect us. It is the ultimate challenge for a coach to develop that level of respect. Face it; we aren't God. We will never get there.

## **At Home**

Few behavioral problems need be dealt with while a judging team is at home. The relative anonymity of judging team students and our minimal influence as compared with athletic teams leaves us with grading standards along with each student's competitiveness and self-worth as motivating forces. The judging experience is a superb medium for emphasizing the "Three R's of the Tantra Totem:" respect for self, respect for others, and responsibility for all your actions. The student is forced to consider a problem, evaluate the variables, arrive at a decision and defend that decision. Independently, an official has posed the problem, evaluated the variables, arrived

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at a decision, and defended that decision. Both must take responsibility for their actions. As students learn, their skills become greater (decisions are made with greater ease and confidence). Their logic conforms more to that of the official; and their defense, both in language and syntax, is more like the expert. Even if the student and the official differ in final analysis, the process has created respect of opinion on the part of both. The successful coach is one who maintains the respect of the students.

### On the Road

A considerably different discipline situation presents itself when the team is traveling. It is apparently human nature, which suggests that a different behavior pattern is acceptable when one is away from home. Like it or not, part of the coaches job resembles that of a law enforcement officer. Respect for law enforcement agencies, or officers, is not inherent with

#### NDSU Judging Team Rules

1. Thou shalt do nothing which will embarrass thyself, thy university or thy coach.
2. Use of mind-altering substances in a state owned vehicle is strictly forbidden. Use of alcoholic beverages at any time is discouraged.
3. Van drivers are responsible for any incurred traffic violations or fines.
4. He who runneth out of gas while driving the van walketh after gas.
5. Unseemly, vulgar or gross conduct will not be tolerated.
6. Unlawful, unethical or immoral acts of any kind will not be tolerated.
7. Actions which may result in bodily injury or property damage are strictly forbidden group in the bathroom.
8. Exploration or excursion by individuals is discouraged.
9. Thou art expected to attend all contest functions. Non-conforming individuals will not be allowed to represent NDSU in any public appearance.
10. SEE RULE #1. Violation of the previous rules shalt be dealt with by immediate abandonment.

the grant of authority, but lies in the discretion with which this power is used. A successful program creates a sense of community (team), which is largely self-disciplining due to peer pressure. It is important that law enforcement personnel, cops or coach, do not overwhelm and replace peer pressure. If students are granted the respect of self-discipline, you have transferred some of the authority to the student. It is more difficult to rebel against your peers or yourself than against some appointed authority figure. Athletic team coaches routinely use the team concept both for competitive and behavioral purposes. Students traveling for the meat program at NDSU are presented with written "Rules of the Road." Again, it is important that the student understand that these rule are not arbitrary or capricious. Students must understand the rules are of benefit to the team, even if some infringement of individual rights seems apparent. NDSU's 10 Rules of the Road for the meat judging team are compared to several athletic team disciplinary guidelines in the following summary.

#### NDSU Athletic Team Guidelines

Many suggestions on appearance, decorum common courtesies, etc. "Remember you represent NDSU, our team, community and state." NO alcohol.

Not applicable.

Not applicable.

No swearing on or off the court (field).

No gambling.

Leave the motel room in decent order, put the trash in waste baskets, put used towels in a

No one-on-one "whispering," everything is a team effort, the coaches are in charge.

DO NOT!:

- leave the motel floor without permission
- leave doors unlocked or propped open even if you are in the room
- use public or private transportation without coach permission
- give out room number

Be on time for all practices, meetings, appointments, travel schedules – breech of rules results in suspension from competition.

Physical aspects of training, conditioning (extra running, weight lifting, stair-climbing, etc.).  
Loss of playing time (suspension from competition).

LOSS OF SCHOLARSHIP.

## At the Plant

The packing plant as a workout site presents a challenge all its own. The security surrounding modern packing plants is exacting. We tell our students that we are going to "their house." Therefore, "their" rules apply; no questions asked. Entry to the plant, conduct while we are in the plant, and exit procedures are in compliance with our contact person's dictates. We expect our students to be courteous and respectful of all plant personnel and to stay out of their way so they can do their job. We tell our students to ignore all jeers, leers, ogles, hoots, or gestures; and certainly don't reciprocate. Students are to inform coaches of any conflicts so the situation can be resolved. It is important that students are told to be aware of where they are in the plant and where their teammates and coaches are at all times. Unless it interferes with the plant routine, we always return carcasses or cuts to their original position if we have moved them, replace eye papers after grading, and remove tags and shroud pins before leaving. The perfect workout scenario would be that plant personnel weren't even aware our team had been there.

## At the Contest

Rules for contest behavior are defined in the material most of us give our students in their training manual. The only thing which needs to be reiterated is respect for the squad leaders, the contest superintendent, and the official committee. Disagreements with official decisions must be discussed only within the team. Only the coach will discuss conflicts with the committee members.

## After the Contest

This is by far the most trying time for most coaches. It is important for the students to enjoy the experience of the contest and to interact with competitors from other universities in a positive manner. Students are going to "party." The challenge is to manage the exuberance. Several attempts at providing a sponsored activity after contests have been tried. The most successful were those instituted by Bob Kaufman when the International was held at Madison and the awards dinner was at the University of Wisconsin Memorial Union. Bob organized an "orchestra" from among the participants to provide dance music. Coaches were present, not as chaperones, but to enjoy the event. For those who chose, a keg was available (legal age at that time was 18 and beer was served in the Union). Most of the students were in one place and the coaches could observe the event. There were few problems.

The impromptu gatherings which take place today are much more difficult to control. The rules NDSU team members are subject to deal with this situation. Students are specifically told that inappropriate behavior is a rule violation. They are told that the coach will not allow inebriated or "hung over" students to represent NDSU in any way. Failure to participate in all contest activities is a serious breach of rules. Our students believe that they will indeed be forced to find their own way home (abandonment) if they break the rules.

I am currently at the halfway point of my 27<sup>th</sup> meat judging team. I have yet to "abandon" a student. Timing is a factor in dealing with behavioral problems. Certainly in 27 years rules have been broken. I have left students at home as both disciplinary and precautionary measures. I have chosen not to use students as team members, both with and without their knowledge, for disciplinary reasons.

In the final analysis it is the individual student who must choose to conform to requirements or not. All a coach can do is to hope to have an influence on this decision.