

Building a Strong Reputation

I was very fortunate during my umpiring career to work with some of the top umpires in the nation and to spend time with many of the guys that were considered the most respected umpires by their peers. This group of elite officials earned the respect that was given them in a number of different ways---the most of which related to their on-field talents, such as experience, judgment, rules knowledge, and the ability to deal with people. The common denominator of the top umpires, though, was that they had a good reputation among other umpires, game officials, and league personnel.

All of the qualities of a baseball umpire combine to form their reputation. From the time we first walked on the field as college umpires, we have been creating a level of respect from the umpires we have worked with and from those that have formed an opinion of our abilities from conversations with others that we've officiated with.

We've all had experiences with officials that seemed to never miss a pitch, to never miss a call on the field, and to be able to manage any kind of situation that could arise on the field. However, in spite of all the successes this type of official seemed to enjoy during the contest, when they walked away from the field their actions diminished all the respect that they may have earned while on the field. Their actions away from the institutions we work for sometimes bring embarrassment to the crew, the league, and to the NCAA and all of these things play a part in developing our reputation as an umpire.

Many of the nation's best technically-qualified umpires excel day in and day out on the field, only to struggle with issues involving choices they have made in their personal life. From dealing with game personnel to acting in a responsible manner off the field, our reputation "precedes us" and will always play a part in the way we are accepted as officials and as individuals.

Each and every time we step a foot on a baseball diamond, we have an opportunity to develop a positive reputation in the minds of team personnel, game management, and the fans that are so critical to the future of the game we all love and have given so much of our life to. The way you deal with issues on the field, with your crew, and with those you sometimes never realize are watching you will all play a part in your potential for improvement as an umpire and your ability to advance in the umpire improvement program.

Remember that character is often defined as what you do when no one is watching. In our business, EVERYONE is ALWAYS watching EVERYTHING we do.

Ron Sebastian
Regional Supervisor