

## **Investing Leads to Greater Accountability**

With the landscape of college baseball changing so rapidly, our job has become increasingly demanding. Media coverage is at an all-time high and the majority of our games are live or streamed online. Head Coaches, Coordinators and AD's have access to video and are becoming more "hands on" concerning our decisions. Being held accountable will necessitate better performance. Over the past few years, Universities and Conferences have been increasing their financial investment/commitment in the officials used to work their games. Why? Because they want the best product on the field. That being the case, we should also make an investment in ourselves to be the best umpire we can possibly be.

Our investment may include: attending a clinic, becoming more knowledgeable of the rules and mechanics, transforming our bodies to "fit the role", etc. Perception is reality and reality is that we need to be in shape and look the part when we hit the field. Actually, our fitness needs to be a priority and should be considered part of investing in ourselves. If we do not "look the part" we may never be given an opportunity. Our mobility can keep head coaches in the dugout, but a lack thereof, will surely cause them question a close call. It's never too late to invest in our career. The more we invest, the greater the dividends, both now and in the future. Build your career and your value by investing in your future.

If you are concerned about your "status" due to not advancing, consider taking advantage of development opportunities in your area. Put yourself in a position to be seen and to succeed. Learning a new skill could re-new your passion for umpiring. Attending a camp could be what is needed to help you achieve your goals and take control of your future. Investing in yourself can also increase your "value" to a Coordinator and/or Conference.

Some people are blessed with a gift of being able to instruct. Embrace those people and take advantage of their knowledge. None of us are too good to learn. We can learn a lot from our peers. Since we all have different levels of experience, ask questions when you see an experienced umpire work. You may learn something that can fit into your unique skill set.

We are being held accountable for our performance, as we should be. We need to be up-to-date with the latest methods in obtaining "information" to help us make the correct "call". Working each and every game as if you have a Supervisor in the stands will help in building a very good foundation. When you work this way every time you hit the field, when there is a Coordinator, it won't be a big deal.

Being held accountable does NOT translate to being perfect. We all make mistakes, that is a given. Mistakes and failures are a valuable teaching tool. To become more accountable, we must be honest with ourselves and others. We must check our ego at

the door. Don't blame others or make excuses. Take ownership of what happens on the field. Managing and controlling a game are critical. How we handle non-routine situations has an effect on other crews if we opt to ignore a situation that should have been addressed. If we handle difficult situations correctly, the crews that follow will not need to "clean up our mess". Learn from mistakes and move on, trying not to make the same mistake again. How we learn and respond from our errors in judgment is what makes a difference. Our job is about gaining experience. It's very hard to gain experience without having a slip-up.

We must always hold ourselves to the highest level of integrity. Not only are we held accountable on the field, we are also accountable for our actions off the field. We represent the NCAA, the Conferences and all umpires in our actions. Regardless of the level an official possesses, the one quality that should be equal among every official is a high level of integrity. By investing in ourselves, we put our self in a better position to succeed. This is the expectation that we are obligated to meet.

The more we invest in ourselves, the better our decisions, which leads to greater accountability.

Best of luck to everyone,

Jeff Head