

2007 ECAC-SIDA Workshop

Baltimore, Maryland (June 7, 2007)

Table Topic: Producing Effective Game Notes
Ernie Larossa • Johns Hopkins University

- **Are They Necessary:** Without a doubt, game notes are an essential item for certain people. The amount of media attention a sport or particular team receives may require the production of a weekly or game-by-game set of notes. However, we all have plenty of work to keep us busy. Don't do them if they aren't necessary.
- **Size Doesn't Matter:** A 40-page set of notes for a 40-minute basketball game seems a bit extreme to me, but larger schools with national media covering them may have no choice. Don't keep adding pages just to add pages. Get the important information in and that's enough. Don't be swayed by what someone else does.
- **The Look Counts:** While the information is the most important thing contained in your notes, the design or "look" is also important. A poorly designed set of game notes will not be effective or useful. The use of boxes, charts and other graphics can enhance your notes and set apart essential information.
- **Proofread:** Typing the last period doesn't mean they are completed. Like any other printed piece, be sure to proofread your notes. Having a student assistant proofread them can be helpful, but remember that they may only catch obvious errors (spelling, grammar, etc.). Simple errors (failing to update a hitting streak, not adjusting a series record or leaving your ranking the same as last week) may be tough for someone else to catch since they "look" accurate (there's nothing spelled wrong, etc.).
- **Bullet Points or Paragraphs:** Paragraph after paragraph of information, while probably accurate, may be difficult for the media to use, especially electronic media broadcasting a game. Shorter "bullet points" are generally more effective and useful. Noting that Johnny Smith is on a 10-game hitting streak during which he is 20-for-30 (.667) with six doubles and 12 RBIs is great stuff. If it's tucked in the middle of five paragraphs it may be tough to find.
- **Don't Forget the Essentials:** Updated coaching records, all-time series records, schedule and results, national or regional rankings and broadcast information. These are simple items that far-too-often are not included.
- **Be Timely:** If a game is to be broadcast (radio or television) it is essential that the announcers have access to your notes as soon as possible. While they always seem to unrealistically want them about 10 minutes after the completion of your last game, it is crucial to give them time to review the notes prior to the broadcast.
- **Hitting the Key Points:** It's unlikely that anyone knows your team as well as you. Even your radio announcer who covers your team from summer camp to the playoffs won't know everything you do and may miss some things in preparing for the game. Make sure to meet with the announcing crew on the day of the game (even for just a couple minutes) to answer any questions they may have. More importantly, you can point out a couple of key items that you feel are worthy of a mention.
- **Statistics:** Cumulative statistics are essential for inclusion and some of the other reports that stat crew can produce can also be helpful (highs and lows, team and opponent game-by-game stats, etc.). However, stat crew will give you way more than you probably need. We played a women's lacrosse game this year and our opponent handed out a 97-page book of notes. Every report that stat crew could produce was included ... a little more than necessary I would say.
- **Share Them:** Educating your administration and coaching staff is part of the job. Make sure they get a set of your notes to read through. You can't possibly tell everyone about everything, but they can all read. They'll know the big stuff for sure, but some of the not-so-big items that you include are still good for them to know.
- **It's Not All About the Games:** If Joe Smith just became the 10th men's basketball player at your school in the last 10 years to be named to the Academic All-America team, get it in there. If he spent last summer working in the emergency room at the local hospital, get it in there. In many ways, this information is more important than the hits, records and streaks which people are more likely to know about already.