

# THE ROLE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCER



by Tomàs Grosmann

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It must be at least thirty years now since I have been regularly sitting (and enjoying myself) at the scorers' table at basketball games with a microphone in hand, speaking to the spectators who have come to watch this great sport. It's a seat I wouldn't trade with anyone in the world.

While I immensely enjoy announcing basketball games, nobody has ever offered me announcing instructions or a set of clear guidelines about what an announcer should know or say, or how I am supposed to react in certain game situations.

Over the years, however, I have developed my own ideas and practice guidelines for other game announcers. I want to thank FIBA for allowing me the opportunity to share these thoughts with people who love basketball, at least as much as I do, people who live and work in and with this great game.

## ANNOUNCER AND ACTORS

I purposely call the first group that the announcer addresses "actors." I don't call them players because among the actors there are also coaches, their assistants, referees, and commissioners. The game announcer is supposed to announce the actor's names to the spectators.



If he fails to pronounce them correctly, it quickly raises doubts about the soundness of the announcer's preparation for the role.

The players who are to be introduced can form their own opinion of an announcer who is not able to pronounce their names.

If I can give any advice based on my experience, it's this: Before the game, take the time to learn the correct pronunciation of names of all players, especially the foreigners. And don't forget the other game officials. In case I have the slightest doubts about pronunciation, I do not hesitate to ask the referees and commissioners how their names are pronounced.

#### ANNOUNCER AND REFEREES

The relationship between announcer and referee must be very respectful and tolerant. An announcer should never anticipate decisions of the referees; he must wait for them and explain (or just announce) them to the spectators.

This should be done without any comment or additional words. An announcer should not take any position concerning decisions. I never say: "The referee called the player's foul". I simply announce, that the player-name and number-committed his first, second, third, or whatever foul.

This allows me to keep a strictly neutral position. A statement such as "The referee called a foul" can raise doubts regarding the correctness of the referee's decision and an announcer should not find himself in such a position. Yes, he should help the referee, but only in order to achieve the sportsmanlike spirit and fair play of the game.

Above all, an announcer must be familiar with basketball rules as well as with the signals of referees, so that he can react to everything that happens on the court.

Spectators have come to expect that announcers explain any unusual situations that may occur during the game. Therefore, it is desirable that the announcer know the rules of the game as well as any veteran referee.

#### ANNOUNCER AND SPECTATORS

Spectators react mainly to the performance of players and to the decisions of the referees.

This "privilege" cannot be taken away from the spectators. It can be expected that the spectators will react to the words of an announcer.

But the announcer must recognize his position as being neutral. During national championship and international competitions, for example, it would not be proper for an announcer to ask the spectators to support one team over another.

"Support your team with your voice!" is what an announcer can say, however. This kind of positive statement does not hurt a



visiting or home team and it can help to positively charge the atmosphere in the arena. However, the announcer cannot cheer for particular players or teams; this would be a misuse of the microphone in hand.

Thanks to the available audio equipment, the announcer has the strongest voice in the arena. But this doesn't mean that it always has to be heard. When it comes to announcing, I have found that less is sometimes more.

By this I mean that the spectators have come to watch the basketball game. Too much talking by an announcer can certainly disturb them.

If the "chatter" continues unabated, spectators will stop paying attention to what is being said.

#### WHO CAN BECOME AN ANNOUNCER

I have left what is probably the most important issue for the end. Top basketball players have gone through years of training and have developed a personal routine that insures success; the best referees are not beginners either, and they, too, have their own routines. Each prepares himself carefully for every game, hoping to improve on their previous performance.

The same sense of professionalism and conscientious attention to detail has to apply to the announcer. An announcer must do his homework, carefully preparing so that he knows all possible details concerning the teams involved in the upcoming game. During the game, he should be ready to provide that information at just the right moment. Like the actors, the announcer is on center stage as well. But he has an additional respon-

sibility. I am not exaggerating: For two hours, it's the announcer who must be the smartest person in the entire arena.

The announcer's duties are varied. When the organizers provide spectators with printed information (bulletin, official program) about the starting line-ups and biographical information on players, it is useless to announce the very same information. However, when the spectators don't have line-ups available, this is a good opportunity for the announcer to draw the spectators' attention to the height of individual players, for example. It would also be interesting to note whether any of the players happen to celebrate birthdays on game day.

In very well-equipped arenas and sport halls, the spectators can learn a lot from information boards. But even so, the announcer should not let the spectators leave at the end of the game without recapping game highlights: Give them the game attendance. Remind them who the leading scorers were for each team. Let them know who had the most rebounds. If a league or team record was broken for the number of victories or the number of points scored during the game, it's this all-important information that can be used to succinctly summarize game highlights.

This may all sound like a lot of work for an announcer, but when you aim to be the best, it takes hard work and pride in what you are doing to achieve your goals. The closer the announcer comes to meeting ideal the better. For whom? you may ask. Well, for the game of basketball. That's because the announcer is also a vital part of this exciting game.