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# DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT LEVEL OF TENSION?

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In order to be well prepared for a game you need routines for your physical and psychological preparations.

You must be prepared to stand the whole game.

At the end of the game you will face, especially in close games, difficult situations to handle.

The players and coaches are tired, which will cause more violations and mistakes.

The game is often decided under this period and that is why your decisions will be very important with great impact to the result of the game.

Of course you are also tired, physically and mentally, under this period. In spite of that, you must make decisions that might be crucial for the whole game.

Therefore you must be in such good shape that your capacity can manage this stress.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATIONS

Which are your expectations before the game?

Are you in good mood and stimulated for your task?

Do you have positive or negative expectations before the game?

Do you have positive or negative experiences before you arrive to the arena?

Are you tensed and unsure and thinking about everything that might happen during the game?

A certain amount of stress - or tension - is just fine when you are facing an important task like to officiate a basketball game.

The tension works like an alarm signal that alerts your senses. But the tension must not turn into stress and uncertainty or even fear and agony. The tension then will have a negative influence on you and on your work as a referee.

## BASIC AND EXTRA TENSION

All of us have a certain amount of basic tension.

The level can be very different, from very low to very high. The extra tension we feel before a demanding task, like our basketball game, can be useful for the referee with the low basic tension, but is harmful for the referee with the high basic tension.

This is the reason why some referees need "pep talk" before the game and others prefer a quiet and calm moment in the locker room.

## THE REASON FOR STRESS

If you use to feel too much tension before your games you better try to find out the reason.

It is not necessarily the game that makes you feel stress. It might be

worries or problems at home or at the job.

Another reason for stress can be your own expectations before the game. If you have made "a bad game", it can cause you to feel unsure for a long period afterwards.

Maybe not conscious - but unconscious. You not only remember the failures, but also the feelings of regrets, reproaches, anger etc. that you felt in that situation.

If you have tried to repress a failure it can cause you to feel worries without knowing why.

You must therefore find out if you have an unnecessary high level of tension and try to find the reason for it.

Your tension will increase the closer you get to the game.

For some referees it ends up in the locker room, for others at tip off. What you must understand is that there are many factors behind your stress.

In many games you know that certain evaluators or commissioners will observe you.

This is another reason for the extra tension to increase.

Even nice persons, who wish you "good luck" before the game, can give you this extra, unwanted stress.

How much stress can you stand?

How do you know how much extra tension you can stand? Are you a referee with low, medium or high basic tension?

The answer is that nobody knows. It is not written in your face which basic tension you have.

Nobody can advise you unless it is a person who knows you very well and who has followed you for a long period, and observed your reactions in different games.

Your best coach in this situation is yourself. As a referee, you are used to observe and analyse.

Try to identify the persons and situations that increase your tension and do your best to avoid these situations.

Another method to decrease your tension and stress is to master a method of relaxation.

Psychological stress - irrespective caused by problems at home, conflicts at the job or negative thinking about the coming basketball game - leads to a bad physical tension in your body.

If you can get rid of this physical "over-tension", experience tells us that you in all probability also has solved your stress problem, as there is no way to be psychological tensioned in a physical relaxed body.

#### **METHODS OF RELAXATION**

There are many different methods to relax your body. Here is an example, which can be used in the dressing room before the game or even in the half-time period.

Sit down in a comfortable way. Sit with your legs slightly spread and the soles on the floor. Your thighs shall rest on the chair. Put your forearms in a cross over the thighs. Lean forwards.

Take a couple of deep breaths and stretch alternative your forearms and your lower part of the legs for 20 seconds. Relax. Feel the difference between a stretched and a relaxed muscle.

Stretch left arm, right arm, left leg, right leg. Relax, stretch again, relax... think all the time of the different feeling of a stretched and a relaxed muscle. Concentrate on the difference and the pleasant feeling when the muscle relax and becomes heavy. Go on with this alternative stretching and relaxing until you feel a total relaxation in your forearms and legs. Finish the exercise by taking a couple of deep breaths.

