

I'm really doing it...Officiating, that is.

"Judged" sports are sometimes considered different than "traditional" officiating; however, both require an adherence to a set of rules and criteria. In an effort to be as objective as possible, below are some tips to ensure fairly officiated contests.

It is important to avoid any biases or prejudice for team, whether negative or positive, and score only on the criteria outlined in the Girls Competitive Cheer Manual. This includes the standards that should be shared by both coaches and judges. Judges should not consider a team's reputation or their style when assigning scores. Rather, judges should compose scores based on the routine presented and the criteria for which it is compared.

Judge what you're assigned to judge

Stay in your own lane when judging competitions. CC officials should not attempt to influence or get involved with penalties/panel discussions unless this is an assignment you received. If there are questions or concerns regarding what/why a judge scored, this should be discussed with that person directly, and in a private setting and professional manner.

Consistency is key

Consistency doesn't mean all judges will fall in line with one another on each's scoring—it means that each team through the day should receive the same level of scrutiny and consistency in expectations and judgment. Through practice, you'll develop your judging scale based on the criteria set forth. Be confident in your

abilities. Don't be swayed by judges on either side of you, and don't try to influence others around you in their scoring.

During a performance, take notes while keeping your eyes on the team. It would be difficult to remember all aspects of the performance for scoring categories and overall impression. In order that judges remain consistent in scoring, it is important that each team is judged on their entire performance and compared to the same standards as everyone else. Writing this down allows you to return to these thoughts to issue a proper score. Template scoring sheets can be found on the website of the Michigan Cheer Judges Association.

Consultation with a coach

Do not allow the coach to question or criticize scoring in an open forum. If the coach is calm and would like explanations, you may discuss with them the performance at the judges' table following the competition.

Be sure to only offer comments about improvements for the team if explicitly asked by the coach. And finally, never discuss the scoring for a team with anyone other than your peers or the head coach of the team in question.

Hopefully these tips to start the season will provide you some guidance during this year. Good luck to all!

Social Media Reminder: The use of social media has undoubtedly changed the lives of so many people in so many ways. Social media is one of the reasons why the world has become smaller. Your reputation as a cheer official matters, and maintaining professionalism in social media is a must. If you are using social media sites such as the ever-popular Facebook, be sure to set the privacy settings accordingly. Monitor yourself all the time and remain professional in all your posts. You must always be careful about your comments. Perception is reality and off-hand comments may be seen as bias. People turn to social media to express their feelings towards what they see. As the saying goes, less talk, less mistakes.

Silence Can't be Quoted