

Officials: What's In Your Game Bag?

By Dave Sheets on July 21, 2015

Television commercials ask us "What's in Your Wallet," or "What's in Your Safe?" However, when you are minutes away from an officiating assignment, none of that matters. Your number one concern is about the uniform and equipment you packed. Most officials have a story about having that sinking feeling of looking into the game bag and knowing what they see, or don't see, isn't good!

In nearly every varsity sport, officials pack a bag that includes their uniform and the tools and equipment necessary to the activity of the contest. More and more officials are packing a bag for the lower level games as well. While some officials still have the luxury of showing up dressed and ready to work for an interscholastic contest, it is rarer with outside job and family commitments.

It is one of those questions that really doesn't have a correct answer, but certainly is one each official should think about and understand their own answer. Do you pack your own bag?

Does your spouse pack your bag?

Do you pack the bag the night before the contest?

Do you pack it after work on the way to the contest?

Do you pack spare clothes and equipment?

Do you have one bag for varsity and another bag for a different level?

Do you color code your packed bags?

Do you have foul weather and good weather bags?

Do you have your "lucky" gear that you pack for certain games?

Does packing your bag include checking your supply of toiletries, towels, candy, gum or other personal items not related to the game uniform?

I am a bit of a control freak, so I am the only person that ever packs my bag. It is your bag, you are ultimately responsible to check it even if someone else packs it.

The best advice is to develop a routine in packing and stick with it. If the black suitcase is your varsity bag and you always pack it before you go to bed, make it happen every time. If you prefer to swing home after work, grab your clothes from the dryer and jam them in the bag as you race to the school, that's fine, just don't act surprised when something isn't correct. A great idea is to create a packing checklist sheet or card that can be laminated and kept in the bag at all times. Simply look at the list just before zipping the bag closed every time you pack.

Many officials always keep a "go" bag in their car during the season. It has enough equipment to let them be called from the stands during a game they intended to watch or from their work at the very last minute.

Veteran officials almost always have multiple uniforms so they can keep a bag packed at all times, pack spare clothes and equipment to help partners or have different outfits based on the weather conditions. Attempting to work any sport with one shirt, one pair of pants, and one pair of shoes is usually a recipe for disaster.

In our busy world, it is easy to be distracted for just a moment and later be in a crisis mode. Develop a plan, follow your plan and eliminate any worry or concern about your packed bag. It will help you focus on the work of the game and the enjoyment of officiating high school sports.