

Do you know the Rules?

Last fall I took a step I had always wanted to take but had never stepped into the opportunity. I signed on with the Illinois High School Association as an official for football, basketball, and baseball. I have always loved sports, was looking for a way to get involved in the community, and needed a way to keep active.

Shortly after I signed on, I received my first set of rulebooks for football. There was a rule book and a case book (hypothetical situations for each rule that help illustrate what the correct call would be for a given situation). When basketball and baseball season rolled around, I received the same books for each sport. Each book is about 100 pages long and technically nuanced on everything from field specifications, to uniforms, to penalties. As I studied the books, there were times where it was overwhelming, times where it was boring, and certain sections that had me thinking "I'm never going to use this rule."

Then, there was the test. You see, they expect the officials to know the rules! Every official must take a test for their sport each year before the season begins. The test includes random questions from a larger slate of study questions (anywhere from 60-80 depending on the sport) and no two people take identical tests. You must make an 80% or better on the test, otherwise you are placed on probation. As you move up the levels of officiating, the percentages are required to be higher, especially if you expect to work post-season contests.

Coaches, players, and fans are not required to take these tests. In fact, I worked a few nights ago with an official who had previously coached for several years. He said he didn't realize how little he knew about the sport until he became an official.

As Christians, the Bible is our rule book. It is the test that we will take before God in judgment. It is the standard to which we will be held as we play the game of life each day. So, let me ask you a question: do you know the rules?

I have seen Christians get upset and belligerent when presented with tests on Bible knowledge and understanding, seeing as how they finished "school" a long time ago. I have heard adults whine and complain about teachers expecting them to work in studying the Bible for themselves. Such responses should not be so.

We do not get to write the rules or change them, but we must know them. If we are to adequately officiate our lives, we need to know the rulebook. If someone calls us for a spiritual "foul," we need to know how to examine the rule book and make sure it is being interpreted properly. We cannot ignore the rule or complain because we don't like the rule. Instead, we must learn and comply better with the rules before us.

If we do not know the rules, we will lose the game of life.

Do you know the rules? ~~ *Adam Cozort*