

# Mentoring New Judges

## *Proposal for Expanding the Number of Registered Officials*

Summary: In the next couple seasons, IHSA Boys Gymnastics stands to lose about one-third of its judges to retirement. Given the fact that assignment chairpersons are barely able to find enough judges as it is, this is a big problem. If we do not successfully add 15-20 officials to the list in the next year, we are in trouble—not just in assigning officials, but also with the IHSA.

### The Three-Part Plan

#### **Registering New Judges**

1. We encourage our assistant coaches, former gymnasts, etc., to register and apply at IHSA.org. They will then receive the rulebook and test. We inform them of the upcoming clinics. The first goal is just to get them registered—there is no obligation at this point.

#### **Shadowing**

2. Once they've passed, they contact their local assignment chairperson (or we do it for them) to let them know that they're ready to "shadow" an experienced judge. This would simply mean sitting with the judge, looking over his/her shoulder, and asking questions between rotations. When available meets are sent out, they reply by listing each one they can do, and by indicating they just want to shadow. The assignment chairperson then notifies the judges at those meets so they are prepared. The aspiring judge should be informed to notify the IHSGCA secretary to arrange for payment (since the host school would not pay for this). We will create a voucher that they fill out with all their meets, and it is signed by the mentoring judge or coach of the home team. We recommend they do this for two or three meets, but it is ultimately up to them.

#### **Partnering**

3. After shadowing two-three meets, two new judges will become partners. They will sit together and judge independently. They will briefly discuss each score before posting it. This gives them the chance to go through judging procedures with a little less pressure. Between two judges, the scores should be reasonably close to appropriate. The judges need to keep in close contact with assignment chairpersons to coordinate this.

#### **Potential Questions/Concerns**

- *Would shadowing judges be paid?* Yes—we are proposing \$25 per meet to cover travel expenses, with a little extra to provide some incentive to younger judges. This will be paid for by the IHSGCA, after the new judge submits a voucher. Partnering judges will split a normal stipend, so each judge would take home approximately \$42.
- *Won't this slow down the pace of meets?* Most definitely. For shadowing and partnering assignments, they should be dual meets if possible. However, we need to think of the big picture here.
- *How many meets would they be required to shadow/partner?* Our recommendation is that they shadow two-three meets, and partner for one-three meets. However, it is up to them when they think they'll be ready. Every judge will be different. Some may decide to spend six meets shadowing and partnering, especially those that have been out of the sport for a while. They should sign up for as many meets as they believe it will take them

to get ready—but only up to three shadows, to keep control of costs. This might be a typical progression:

- Shadow three meets in March
- Partner for two meets in March/April
- Independently judge one-two meets in April.
- *What about important conference match-ups that might be close?* As much as possible, assignment chairpersons and coaches should keep an eye on this. This may happen, and we'll just need to roll with it for the long-term benefits.
- *How much will this cost the IHSGCA?* Since we would only be paying for the shadowing, it might look like this:
  - Assuming we get 20 aspiring judges, and they shadow an average of three meets, it would be  $20 \times 5 \times \$25 = \text{approx. } \$2500$  maximum per season. We will pay for up to five shadows.

### **Required Elements for Effective Implementation**

- Cooperation from **all** coaches in seeking new judges. Jason Orna's newsletter may be a good way to publicize this outside of our association.
- Participation from veteran coaches who haven't judged before, or haven't judged in a long time.
- Buy-in and cooperation from assignment chairpersons. This will be extra work for them, but in the long run, should pay big dividends.
- Coaches at these meets must be patient and helpful with new judges, rather than complain about scores and scare them away. We have lost judges in the past to this behavior.