

## **Guidelines and Suggestions for Referees Using Headsets**

As technology has improved, wireless communication between sports officials has gained acceptance and become more commonplace in many sports. Headsets are now getting more traction in volleyball and are approved for use by the IHSA. Used correctly, this technology can help referees make better decisions within rallies and also aid them in handling post-rally situations and issues. This document provides some guidelines and suggestions for how to best use this technology in IHSA matches.

### **Headset Use**

- Headsets may be used in IHSA regular season matches. They are not required. Currently, their use has not been approved for IHSA post-season matches.
- Headsets, when used, will be provided (and purchased) by referees working the match.
- Open microphone headsets are better suited to in-rally communication than push-to-talk models.

### **Headset Basics**

- Headsets should not replace any existing mechanics, such as discreet signals, but should instead supplement those mechanics.
- There is a tendency for some people to be overly chatty, which may be distracting to some partners. Each person's comfort level is different, so default to only using the headset for pertinent communication.
- Talking with a whistle in your mouth during a rally can be challenging, so be sure to practice before stepping on the court.
- The microphone should be near your mouth so it can best pick up what you are trying to communicate. Be aware that this may allow it to pick up other, unintended noises as well.
- After a rally, when the whistle is out of your mouth, you may need to consider covering your mouth in some cases so that people cannot read your lips.
- Referees should communicate before the match about expectations using headsets and be sure to have a post-match discussion about what worked well and what could be improved.

### **In-Rally Communication**

- Some systems take a fraction of a second to determine that you are speaking and start transmitting. This could affect what you are trying to convey. For example, if you try to say, "NO TOUCH," the "NO" might be missed and come across as just "TOUCH." Instead, something like "NO – NO – NO" might be better (see below).
- It is often best to use short, repeated expressions. Some common examples are:
  - "NO – NO – NO" indicating no touch by the block.
  - "DOWN – DOWN – DOWN" for an unsuccessful pancake.
  - "GOOD – GOOD – GOOD" for a situation where you wish to convey you think play should continue (e.g., a successful pancake, a player jumping from behind the attack line, etc.)

- “BACK – BACK – BACK” for a back-row player on the attack line or illegally attacking or blocking the ball.
- “OVER – OVER – OVER” when you see what you believe a player illegally contacted the ball on the opponent’s side of the net.
- “LIBERO – LIBERO – LIBERO” when the libero uses overhand finger action on or in front of the attack line.

#### Post- and Between-Rally Communication

- The headsets can be used to resolve tight plays where there may be some uncertainty about which team won the rally. In some cases, this can prevent a conference at the stand. For example:
  - Which team hit the ball into the antenna?
  - Did the ball that was hit into the tape and landed out of bounds on the attacker’s side also contact a blocker?
  - Assistance on in/out/touch calls, especially when there are no line judges.
- Other potentially helpful communication:
  - Requesting and administering misconduct and unnecessary delay/administrative cards, including clarifying which participant received a misconduct card.
  - Helping with alignment issues
  - When requested, providing helpful information such as setter and/or libero positioning
  - Resolving scoring issues when the R1’s input may be helpful
  - Discussing uncommon rules/interpretations that may apply to a given situation.

In summary, headsets can be a valuable tool in helping referee performance on a match. Crisp, concise communication is best within a rally. Partners should work together to understand expectations going into a match and debrief afterwards in order to maximize the value of this tool.