

THE POLITICS OF SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT - PART 3 OF A SERIES

Power and Control - Do We Really Have Any?

By Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

For many, the thought of Organizational Politics conjures up images of people being manipulated and hard fought power struggles. We all want to be in control. After all, control means power. Power helps you get things done so more control seems to equal more power. Or, said another way, if not to control everything around us, at least to not let external forces control and manipulate us. For the less Machiavellian among us, we just want to go to work, do a good job and not be hassled by people. Like it or not, conflicts with people, whether it's the people we work for, work with, or deal with in some way make us feel like someone else is in the driver's seat. We feel powerless and not in control.

The truth is, I have very little power. I have no power over the people I come in contact with, the places where I work or things I use to do my job. People still do what people do. Some years my sports fields are better than other years. I have some influence of course, but I really don't control the outcome. I have no power or control over the weather. Well maintained machinery occasionally fails. I have no power over whether a delivery of materials shows up when I specify it. People don't do what they promise. Budgets get cut. Sometimes things just happen.

That's it. Powerless!

But I don't have to be defeated. Especially, if I take care of myself, keep my attitude under control, and I keep things in the proper perspective.

Here is the paradox. By knowing what I have no power over means that I don't have to waste what power I do have on the things that I have no power over. And that is empowering!

For example, when a game has to be to be played in the rain, my field is probably going to be trashed. I might not have the power to stop the game, but I can do two things. First, I need to find acceptance of the things I cannot change. Why? I cannot control the weather, or what people do. It is what it is. If I can't change it, I don't have to worry about it because I can't control it. All I have to do is accept it. I don't even have to like it. Now I have to do the second thing - I have to deal with it. If I know my capabilities, the limits of my authority, and use my tools and talents to change the things I can; here is what I can do:

- I can advise the decision maker the consequences of playing on a saturated field.
- I can adjust my turf management program to the conditions.
- I can submit a detailed itemized bill for field repair.
- I can use tact respect and diplomacy when dealing with people.

Notice that in these last statements, I have self control. That is my power. If I take care of myself by tending to my basic needs - not be hungry, angry, and lonely or tired - I have a better chance of maintaining self control. So you see, I might not be able to control the outcome, but I don't have to make it worse. My advantage is I am only responsible for what I control, not what I can't control.

I just need to know what I have to accept and what I have to change. The skill is in knowing what is no longer acceptable, what needs to be changed, how and when. But please remember, that when the winds of change blow hard enough, the most trivial of things can become deadly projectiles.

NEXT ISSUE: Putting it all to Work- Best Practices for Dealing with People

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