

Open Letter

Dear noticeably biased referees,

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Before I begin to delve into the main topic of this letter, I want to clarify something. I am extremely grateful for everything most referees do; I understand running up and down the court with us is in no way an easy task. Basketball is a very fast-paced sport, possession easily switches, and as a player I would know this. I am baffled with the amount of calls you manage to catch while you're trying to sprint as hard as we are down the court.

On the flip side of this coin, are the refs who ignore so many calls it's ridiculous, or maybe just don't remember to pay attention half the time, I'm not sure. I've personally heard refs admit they didn't see the play, even though I'm under the impression that is what you are being paid to do here. No one is perfect, or able to see absolutely everything during the game. Isn't that the reason there are two of you? Not sure if this is common knowledge, but players *can* tell whether you're serious about keeping the game fair or not, and what kind of attitude you bring. Refs are such a vital part of the whole game when you think about it; your job is to keep play clean, and fair. How can you do that when you're taking a mental vacation?

Another huge pet peeve for me is biased referees, and I know I'm not the only one who has gone through this type of strange situation. Surprise, we see that you're chatting up the other team, joking around, wishing them luck, and giving pointers! Come on; at least pretend you're not rooting for your old high school. Personally, this is just distasteful to me. I'm not going to say that as a teenager, I obviously know better than you, but we understand the concept of a foul. There seems to be a blind eye when our players are thrown to the ground, but a little bit of contact from us and the world is ending! We're not the only team who realizes this game is being played. Crying on the floor 3 times because they know it gets your attention is just a little bit... you know, pathetic.

Perhaps some of this is coming from a place of anger and bitterness, or a lot of it is. My main problem with it is how much power you hold as a referee. No, you can't get the ball in the hoop for them, but you can definitely give them advantages. I strongly believe in fair play, and the irony of you being dishonest is almost humorous, as the whole idea of your job *is* to be honest. I wish this irony was funny to me.

Sincerely,

Nicole Skrypec



Pre-Game To-Do List

1. Eat a good meal a couple hours before the game. Pasta is a personal favorite, it's tasty and gives you energy!
2. Wrestle that hair into a ponytail, multiple attempts and hair elastics may be needed.
3. Grab a good water bottle that's not prone to spills. Don't forget some ice cubes.
4. Confirm time, and place, of the game on the team group chat.
5. Make sure you put on the right jersey. Pack the alternate color scheme just in case.
6. Throw on some sweats and a hoodie; you'll most likely be freezing before and after the game.
7. The right socks can save you from a world of pain, grab those good Nike basketball socks.
8. KT tape is optional for most athletes, but it's a miracle when it comes to common injuries during the game.
9. Warm-up shirts make you look like a force to reckon with, and they look good! Pack this as well.
10. Quality shoes are by far one of the most important items to bring.
11. Time to hit the road! Make sure you leave early enough for a good warm-up before the game starts.
12. Static stretching is absolutely amazing; grab the girls for a good stretch to prevent painful tears in your muscles.
13. Get a couple shots up, maybe some layups to get the blood flowing through your arms.
14. Those last two minutes before the game starts are the most nerve-wracking, but a pep talk with the team does wonders.
15. Remember to take a deep breath before heading out on that court. Shake your nerves off with a loud team cheer and get ready to play.



(Wo)Man-Makers

We are a family strung together with love,
Love for the sport, the sweat, blood, and tears.
We are a force to reckon with.

We are made of sports bras, ponytails, and Nike headbands,
A little bit of tomboy in our blood.
It's serious when our piercings are out

We are given 4 quarters of 10 minutes,
To prove ourselves as a team, to get shots up.
We are each given 5 player fouls.

We know that suicide laps, man-makers, and demon drills,
Lead to victory laps.
We know our muscles should be screaming louder than that buzzer.

"You're good for a girl."

Damn right, we know that, too.



Recipe for the Perfect Basketball Game

You will need:

- 4 Cups of leaning-off-the-bleachers suspense
- 1 Team chant
- 2 Unbiased referees and scorekeepers
- 1 ½ Tablespoon of team rivalry
- 5 Teaspoons of jersey colors
- 2 Team warm-ups
- A dash of foul shots
- 1 Court and gymnasium
- 2½ Tablespoons of cheering
- 1 Basketball
- 2 Competitive teams
- 1 Sweet victory

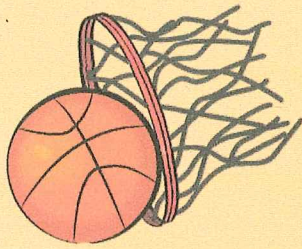
Directions:

- 1) Preheat your nice, shiny court in the gymnasium. Be sure any shoes are able to squeak against the floor.
- 2) Generously spread the two competitive teams over the court, the teaspoons of jersey colors should follow. Once both teams are settled, add the rivalry here.
- 3) Next, your referees and hopefully intelligent scorekeepers should be stirred into the mix. Team warm-ups should begin now, playing music during this is optional.
- 4) Leave both teams to simmer a bit in their own nerves and excitement before they head off court for a team cheer. Lots of enthusiasm is recommended here!
- 5) 2 cups of suspense must be added while the two teams walk on court. Now is the time to throw the basketball into the mix, only 1 tablespoon of cheering to follow this.
- 6) Let the game time run before adding your dash of foul shots right before the final buzzer goes off. Tastefully use the rest of your suspense and another ½ Tablespoon of cheering.
- 7) Once the foul shot is made, top off your game with a sweet victory! More cheering here adds to the sweet flavor, and there you have it! The perfect basketball game.

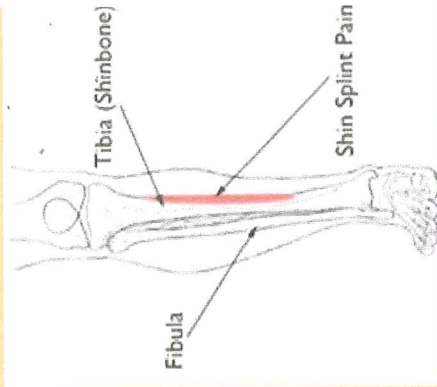
(Serves 1-2 bleachers full of people)



MY BASKETBALL EXPERIENCE



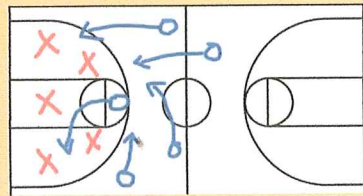
Shin splints: acute pain in the shin and lower leg caused by prolonged running, typically on hard sur-



Joined the esteemed Basketball Club at Happy Thought School. Cross-overs being possible for a kid in Grade 4 blew my mind as I began to understand the rules of the game. Not to brag, but I was pretty good compared to that group.



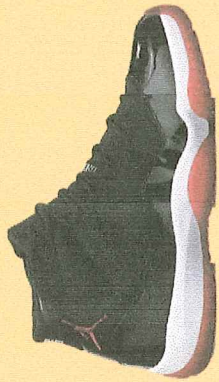
After watching my older brother play a game, I realized how badly I wanted to be playing with them. I would force him to show me new plays he learned on a whiteboard everyday.



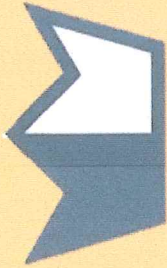
Finally! I was able to join the school team in grade 7. One taste of the intensity of the game and I was in love. I was even asked to play with the grade 9 girls team for a weekend while in grade 8, which was a huge confidence boost to me.



When grade 9 came along, I was certain I wanted to get more serious with basketball. The only problem was my quickly worsening shin splints. Luckily, a simple but effective cure was thrown upon me after a couple of months: My first pair of Air Jordans!



The 4 days of Junior Varsity tryouts were the most nerve-racking days of my life. I had wanted this so bad from middle school, and I couldn't believe it when I made the team. To my surprise, I even got athlete of the month while on this team, and can't wait for more playing time!



Open letter to Referee's

Dear Referee's, noticeably biased

Indent → Before I begin to delve into the main ^{Point} ~~idea~~ of this letter, I want to clarify something. I am extremely grateful for everything you do, I understand running up and down the court with us ^{is} in no ^{easy} task. The game is very fast paced, as a player, I would know, and it still baffles me how many calls you actually catch.

I'm not sure which. However, on the flip side of this coin, there are so many calls you either ignore, or just don't see. Half of the time you even admit you did not see the play, even though you're literally being paid to watch what's happening! No one is perfect, but players can tell whether you're serious about letting the game or not. The Referee's are such a vital part of the game, you have the job to keep the play clean and fair. How can you do that when you just get distracted from the game?

Another huge pet peeve for me is biased Referees. My blood boils just thinking about how many times I've gone through this. When we see you chatting up the other team, joking around with them, and giving pointers, it's just a little bit obvious you may have a favourite. I mean come on, you're not even going to pretend you're not rooting for your old high school? I honestly believe it's just ⁱⁿ poor taste when ~~lets do this~~. Yes, we even notice when you wish them luck on foul shots that shouldn't have been called. We notice that the slightest contact from our team gets fouled, but you seem to turn a blind eye when our players are thrown to the ground. You do realize your favourite team realizes this too, right? Somehow they end up on the floor crying 3 times, but ~~regardless, we still hit the floor and get right back up.~~

I just find it so ironic that the whole idea of your job is to tell the truth, but you're not even doing that! However, you're smart enough to deceive us in little ways as to not be obvious. I wish I could find this irony funny, but I can't.

Sincerely,

Nicole Strypec

Pre-Game to-do list

- ① Wrestle that hair into a ponytail, Multiple attempts ^{and hair elastics} may be needed.
- ② Eat a good meal, pasta is a personal favourite.
- ③ Grab a water bottle and fill it up. Don't forget the ice!
- ④ Confirm time, and place, with your teammates and coaches. ^{-on the group chat}
- ⑤ Make sure you put on the right jersey color scheme, ^{+ pack alternate colors}
- ⑥ Throw on some sweats and a hoodie; you'll be ^{really} cold after the game. ^{is done.}
- ⑦ The right socks can save you from a world of pain, put on your good Nike basketball socks.
- ⑧ KT tape is optional, but if you have any common injuries from the game, this is a must.
- ⑨ Warm-up shirts make you look like a force to ^{reckon} ~~mess~~ with - and they look good! Pack this as well.
- ⑩ Quality shoes are by far one of the most important items to ^{bring} have. Do not forget to bring these.
- ⑪ Time to hit the road! Make sure you leave early enough ^{for a warm up before} ~~to get~~ to the game ^{begins}.
- ⑫ Static stretching is absolutely amazing; grab the girls for a good stretch to prevent painful [←] tears ~~in your~~ muscles. ^{get the blood flowing in}
- ⑬ Get a couple shots and layups in to ~~warm up~~ your arms.
- ⑭ Those last two minutes before the game starts are the most nerve-racking, but a pep talk with the team ~~helps~~ ^{does wonders}.
- ⑮ Remember to take ~~one~~ ^a deep breath before heading out on that court. Get ready to play.