



Welcome to this eighty sixth edition of **“The Referee”**, the newsletter for all NSW State League Football Referees. This newsletter will enable our branch to communicate directly with our members and will cover issues and areas of interest to all referees. We wish to ensure that all information, educational resources and opportunities that our branch provides for referees finds its way to those who are likely to benefit most – and that’s you!



**Merry Christmas to All  
NSWSLFR Members and  
Referees Worldwide**



LEGEA

*Recognise the implications of passive or active play in offside judgments. Whilst the referee is rarely in a position to judge whether a player is in an offside position, you will be able to determine whether a player is involved in active play or not, should the assistant raise their flag for offside. If the player flagged offside is not involved in active play, then play should be allowed to continue and the assistant acknowledged with a wave to drop their flag.*

## ***Unwritten Rules of Officiating***

Every official knows the importance of the Laws of the Game. Regardless of this, there are some unwritten rules you should follow as well. These unwritten rules are tips that might help you in certain situations, but are not official rules, and there are times when they will not help - you need to use your judgment and experience to apply them, and not blindly follow them. "You have all heard of Law 18 – Common Sense, which is part of our game, but there is much more to consider.

### **1. When you “think” you saw something, YOU DIDN’T.**

There are times you will be focused on action in your coverage area but something on the farthest edge of your peripheral vision will draw your attention. “Gee whiz,” you’ll say to yourself. “That looked like a foul, but I didn’t see the whole thing. My gut says it was a foul. Better safe than sorry. I am going to have to call it.”

Missing a call is never a positive thing. However, most referee coaches and assessors will tell you that failing to call something that did occur is more acceptable than calling something you aren’t absolutely positive happened. Gut feeling is a valuable officiating tool. Many times, your instincts will guide you in the right direction. However, your eyes trump all. See what you call and call only what you see. You should never guess or listen to the players if you have not seen it. Look towards your assistants for help and take their advice. Remember though the final decision is up to you and if nobody from the third team is sure don’t call it.

### **2. The CAPTAIN is not always the team leader.**

For whatever reason, the so-called team leader or “captain” can sometimes be anything but a player that will help you to defuse a situation and respond positively with other players during a game. That player can often be the one causing problems for you and others.

When that’s the case, ignore the fact that he or she isn’t doing a captain’s job and treat them just as a player – after all they have no special responsibilities in law other than being present at the coin toss. Always be polite to them if they ask a question on a decision but, if they want to argue with you deal with in the appropriate manner. Often there is another player on the captain’s team who is more responsible and respectful about decisions made and helps you out by telling his teammates to get on with it and play football.

### **3. Keep the game MOVING.**

There are very few referees who want to be on the field of play for a really long game. Yes, stop the play when you have to and it is necessary under law to do so but you must endeavour to keep the game flowing with as few stoppages as possible. Consider what “football expects” and reduce the time taken for stoppages in the game.

However, there are some games that are just going to be longer than others. That football game that features two defensive teams who fall over at the slightest contact, the smallest nudge or even when they are not touched. Often, they feign injury to soak up time, delay substitutions, take a long time to get up and generally doing everything they can to delay restarts of play. Dropping the ball for teammate at a throw-in wastes time and needs to be dealt with appropriately. As the referee you need to keep the game flowing. Yes, the laws have been changed recently concerning players being substituted leaving the field of play at the nearest point, changes for goal kicks, dropped balls, etc. All of this helps the referee but he or she still needs to focus and concentrate for 100% of the match and eliminate, as much as possible, time consuming delaying tactics of teams,

What is not acceptable is for officials to be the cause of a game going longer by not dealing with delaying tactics, substitutions quickly, injuries more responsible and efficiently as well as throw-ins, free kicks taking, etc, etc. As the referee do everything possible to make a dead ball live again or to get the clock running as soon as possible. That is, endeavour to keep the game flowing as much as possible. That doesn’t mean neglecting important duties or rushing teams. It does mean being efficient with recording substitutions or enforcing penalties, quickly getting into positions for restarts and getting the next phase of play started without delay.

#### **4. Provide COURTESY to players when it's needed.**

While a referee should strive to keep the game moving, there are times when you need to it slow down. Get to an injured player promptly, show concern and wave the trainer/physio onto the field of play as soon as possible. Whilst the referee is not normally a Doctor, he or she needs to be able to read if a player is really hurt or are just needing a breather and delaying play. However, officials need to be aware when players are really injured and show them some courtesy when it is needed. Be aware of concussion and the current procedures for that. Whilst we are trying to keep the game flowing, we must use common sense (Law 18) throughout the match

Allowing a player a few minutes, when they are really hurt and injured, will be much appreciated and could help you for the rest of the game as you could gain their respect and they, in turn, hurry things up for you when requested.

When tensions get high as the temperature of the match gets higher with both teams trying to get a result take a moment to put the ball back into play and use that time to give a friendly reminder as opposed to a premature free kick or penalty. When you feel the situation has had a moment to calm down, blow the whistle and get the game moving.

#### **5. Give a LONGER ROPE to those in charge.**

Maybe more important is the flip side of this rule: Those who aren't in charge don't get a long rope. Yes, you should listen to head coaches and managers who give their thoughts to you about a call or situation — as long as they don't cross the line. Communication, including listening to perceived grievances, is part of game management.

However, assistant coaches, players and other bench personnel should not be given the same patience or privilege. Unsportsmanlike talk and actions by those individuals need to be addressed right away. If warranted, you can give head coaches a chance to take care of other game participants. However, if they don't take care of business, you need to step up and penalise appropriately.

There has to be some form of hierarchy of tolerance and head coaches are at the top. Use preventive officiating whenever you can and tolerate a bit more from them. Work with them until their behaviour becomes a distraction.

#### **6. Give the BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT to those who have earned respect.**

There will be times — probably in every game — when you get questioned on a decision you made or a penalty you called. How you respond to that question should be determined in part by how you are asked. Think about the moaning upset player or the ranting, raving head coach. Anything that doesn't go exactly how he or she wants, and the blame is pointed toward you or your assistants. You are to blame for his or her team's woes. Now think about the coach who worries about his or her team throughout the game but doesn't get upset at you when fouls, offside, penalties, sanctions, etc. are given against their team. Instead, that coach focuses on "coaching" his or her players.

In a tight moment, both coaches question a call. The coach who doesn't go ballistic on every call deserves a more thorough response than the lunatic. It is as simple as that.

Because it is so out of character for that calmer head coach to question a call, maybe he or she saw something that didn't make sense or was done wrong by the LOTG. Taking the time to acknowledge the concern or clarify a decision is time well-spent. The ballistic coach may have seen the same thing, but doesn't deserve the benefit of the doubt since that coach has been on your case about everything.

## **7. Look COACHES in the eye.**

Police will tell you that suspects who lower or turn their heads when providing alibis are withholding information. It is difficult to obfuscate when you are looking someone right in the eye. Whether you are introducing yourself to the coach before the game or answering his or her question during the course of play, communication should be done face to face and straight on. Even if you are delivering bad news, you will have more credibility and gain more respect by looking the coach in the eye.

Understand that advice applies only when the ball is dead, such as during a stoppage in play. If you need to communicate with the coach during play, keep your eyes on the action and wait for the next stoppage in play unless the coach's action requires immediate attention.

## **8. WHEN IN DOUBT, do what is expected.**

A referee takes on the task of applying mainly descriptive rules to fluid situations, but there are times in games when that referee may not be immediately certain what action to take after observing a situation or an incident. The LOTG will spell out the intent and guiding principles of the rules and the better referees figure out how to apply them equitably, in context. However, there are times when a referee faces doubt at the moment, he or she is expected to make a call or no-call. When that happens, it's best to do what is expected.

Does it appear that a player sustained a possible concussion even though he or she does not have a loss of consciousness after a head clash with an opponent? If there is any doubt, it is best to take that player out of the game to get checked. In any event, do not try to ignore the situation or shrug your shoulders. You'll lose credibility fast.

Referees will never be 100 percent sure of what they see 100 percent of the time. That's not humanly possible. In those grey-area moments when a call is necessary, do what is expected and make the call or ruling with a clear conscience. Remember – Do what football expects.

## **9. Answer QUESTIONS, not statements.**

"That's a bad call." "That was an interference." "He pushed him." What do all those comments have in common? You are correct if you answered, "They are statements that coaches say/yell/shout, etc."

Coaches say a lot to referees and other officials during a game; and much of what they have to say, whether it is a valid point or not, does not need a response. Statements don't need an answer from officials. Often the only time you need to respond to a statement is when you are delivering a warning or a penalty for a coach that crosses the line.

What deserves a respectful response when time permits are a legitimate question. Referees can save themselves a lot of headaches and heartburn by answering only what is asked.

## **10. Don't answer the question you don't have INFORMATION about.**

You don't need to answer every question, though. That most often relates to a coach or player asking a question about a decision made by an official, be it the referee, assistant referee or the 4<sup>th</sup> official. If you don't know what happened, don't guess. If you don't have information, tell the coach or player you'll find out for him or her at halftime or suggest the coach talk to your Assistant Referee. Whatever you do, make sure you are supportive of your colleague and don't throw him or her under the bus.

Sometimes a coach or player may ask you about a rule or situation that you are not sure about. If you don't have the knowledge or information you need, don't guess at the answer. You'll lose all credibility if you answer the question wrong. Instead, seek assistance from a colleague on the match, with you, or check your current LOTG book after the match and advise the coach or player accordingly. Alternatively, be honest and advise the coach



or player that you don't have the answer at the moment and will get back to them if they wish. After the match contact a senior referee, referee's coach or TSC member for advice. Then vow to study the LOTG more, so that you can answer that question and others if they come up in the future.

#### **11. Get the game going after a MISTAKE or SEND-OFF.**

Sure, send-offs and mistakes are a big deal. However, it is the responsibility of the referee to make sure they don't become a huge deal and negatively impact a game.

When your game has a situation, such as send-off or a decision controversy, the best thing you can do is to get the next phase of play started. Once the match action resumes, players, coaches and fans will typically worry about that action and forget about the situation that caused the problem in the first place.

While participants will be forced to move on when action resumes, referees should keep the mistake/send-off in the back of their mind. Don't dwell on what happened but keep in mind that it could lead to future issues. Managing the game by making sure your presence is felt even more after send-offs for fighting, for example, is a good way to prevent future problems.

#### **12. TALKS with your Assistants should lean toward the official with the better view or experience.**

Because coverage areas sometimes overlap, there are going to be situations in which more than one official has a view or sight of the situation and signals accordingly. What happens when you're the other official and those calls conflict? If you are in the role of the referee (ultimate decision-maker), which way do you go?

To begin, the officials involved must express certainty. If either indicates doubt, go with the other member of the third team. "I think" is not acceptable. There is a difference between actual decisions and opinions. If neither official back's down, consider the angle or proximity to the play. Was one official significantly closer than the other? Was one positioned with a better angle of view? Position and distance are key considerations.

If you're still at an impasse, lean toward the more experienced official who has likely seen that situation more often and knows how best to make the best decision on it.

#### **13. Be 100 percent sure if making the UNEXPECTED CALL.**

Several years ago, a referee made a controversial decision to award a penalty in the 95<sup>th</sup> minute of play in a Grand Final. Everyone at the ground thought that the attacker had attempted to deceive the referee, fallen far too easily and made a meal of it. The team scored from the penalty mark and won the Grand Final.

The opposing coach argued, within the bounds of sportsmanship, asking the referee if he was certain it was a fair penalty decision. The referee replied that he was positive and that he would never make that decision unless he was absolutely sure. Afterward, the coach acknowledged that the referee was an experienced official and that if he was that sure then he must have seen it.

It is never a good idea to enforce a decision just to let everyone know that you know the law book. However, if it needs to be called, sell it and be prepared to back it up with confidence. The more unusual the situation, the surer you must be.

#### **14. Don't insert yourself or disrupt GAME RHYTHM if it's not necessary.**

If you are a referee and you somehow don't feel "in the game" because little if anything is happening to make a decision on, back off. Don't be that official with a quick whistle or flag, looking for something, any kind of violation or penalty, to make it look like you are "in the game." Back off. It's better for you, your assistants and the game.

Many referees think they aren't doing their job if they don't enforce the LOTG 100%, especially if they haven't been heard from early in a game or an extended period of time during the game. It will be an uncomfortable situation for many, but the better referees know when to stay out of the way and call only what needs to be called. Under no circumstances should a referee ignore fouls that involve the safety of the players, but being too quick to insert yourself when you don't need to will result in too many flags or whistles for minor violations or for phantom violations that are better handled with preventive officiating. Use Law 18 – common sense when it is more appropriate for the situation

Making a decision can be very straightforward and easy. But withholding a flag or whistle in a situation that is close but doesn't warrant you to stop the game takes discipline and confidence. At some point the game will need you and when it does, be ready. In the meantime, back off and let the game flow.

#### **15. Let the PLAYERS help you make the call.**

Generally, players are not award-winning actors. As you go down from the professional elite levels, to National Premier League semi-professional level, to District Community Football level and eventually to High School and Junior School level, the acting skills are dramatically worse.

One of the toughest calls to get right in football is the new handball law changes. Was the offence deliberate including moving the hand/arm towards the ball? Did they gain possession after the ball touched their hand/arm even if accidental? Did it create a goal scoring opportunity by giving possession from the hand/arm? Did the handball result when the hand/arm has made their body unnaturally bigger? Was the hand/arm above or beyond their shoulder level? Etc. etc. (See Law 12 Section 1 Page 57).

As the referee you need to read the player's reaction to the ball hitting their hand/arm. If they pretend or indicate that it didn't hit them there is a pretty good chance it did hit their hand. If the player doesn't react then there is every possibility that it didn't hit their hand/arm and it is fair enough to play on. So read the reaction of the player and use that to provide you with the additional information needed to make the correct decision.

If a player hustles to save a ball from going out over the sideline or goal line, even if you didn't see which player it touched last, you usually have an indication of the right decision to make on whose throw-in it is and whether it is a goal kick or a corner kick. In this age of diving and simulation, the decision is often a little tougher, but reading players' initial reaction to many situations will often still help you when you need it to.

#### **16. When a game is obviously over, your FOCUS and CONCENTRATION needs to be stronger.**

Sometimes, there are games that are decided early on, sometimes even early in the first half. It's about that time when teams will start going through the motions, if they haven't already, and that makes it easy for referees and their assistants to do the same.

Thoughts of things at home, work, meetings or your next game can easily grab your attention instead of the game in front of you. That's the time to increase your focus as much as possible. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by anything. Focus and concentrate on the game and use it as an opportunity to improve. A one-sided match situation offers referees the perfect time to work on certain mechanics or habits in their game or perhaps to experiment with a coaching suggestion from a referee's coach or assessor.

Above all, don't physically quit on the game. Continue to hustle even though you may have the urge to loaf. Apply personal pride, vanity or your competitive streak. Draw upon any inner strength or collection of emotions or memories to stay in the game. Do anything necessary to keep your focus and not let up.

*Modified and adapted from an article in Referee (March 2020)*

## 2019-2020 Laws of the Game Quiz

A thorough understanding of the Laws of the Game is an essential quality of a good referee. All referees should regularly review their Laws of the Game book to ensure they are correctly interpreting and applying them.

This monthly LOTG Quiz is highly recommended for all active referees and assessors and counts towards meeting part of the criteria for honour games consideration and annual awards. To reinforce your knowledge, you are encouraged to utilise your Laws of the Game Book to assist in answering the quiz questions. All quiz questions are based on the 2019/2020 IFAB LOTG.

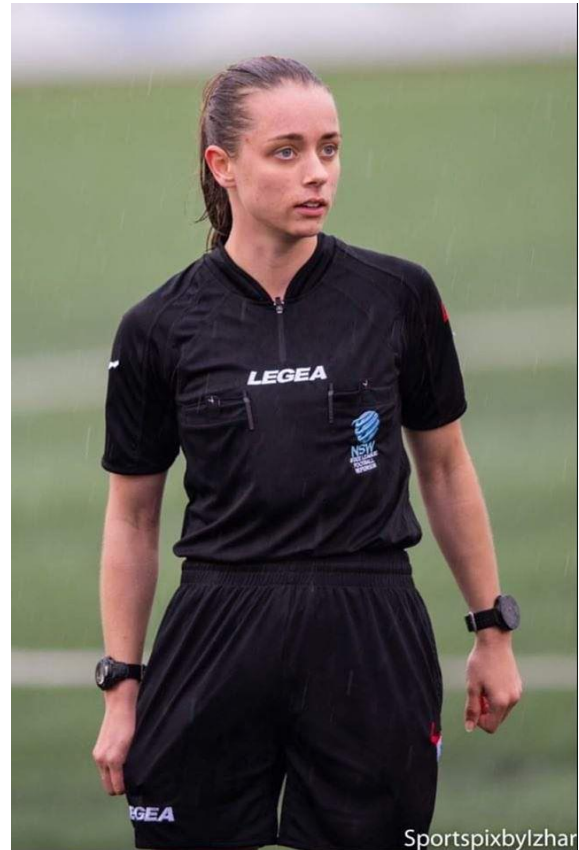
[Click Here](#)

*Click on the "Click Here" button to complete the highly recommended monthly LOTG Quiz to test yourself on how well you know the laws.*

November LOTG Quiz Answers: 1 - D; 2 - B; 3 - A; 4 - D; 5 - A; 6 - C; 7 - B; 8 - A; 9 - C; 10 - A.

## Important Dates

### AGM



*Richard Baker - NSWSLFR TSC Member  
and Newsletter Editor*

