



Welcome to this ninety fifth 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!



To do for NSWSLFR members in September 2021:

1. [Review the 2020/21 LOTG changes](#)
2. [Make yourself available for competition matches on Horizon WebRef](#)
3. [Attend training every week](#)
4. [Attend September General Meeting](#)

Composed Player Management

In refereeing circles, we often discuss the importance of “player management”: influencing player behaviour through verbal and non-verbal interaction, as well as the usual tools of foul selection and misconduct appropriation.



The referees in the Barclays Premier League are especially accomplished at this art; they need to be, given the egos of the multi-millionaire players whom they referee.

FIFA referee Mark Clattenburg provided (another) fine example of this in a recent match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City. See the following video clip link: <https://vimeo.com/586128776>

After whistling for an obvious foul – and possible misconduct – Clattenburg summoned the offending player over for a chat. Clattenburg successfully employed facial expressions, verbal communication and gestures, all while remaining calm and composed.

Note that Clattenburg makes strong eye contact with the player, but his body language is not threatening or demeaning. I would describe it as firm and professional.

I’m not a great lip reader to begin with, but add in a Geordie accent and I’m completely lost. So, I can’t tell you every word Clattenburg says, but I’m fairly certain he begins the conversation with “That’s your first foul” and ends it with “I’m not having it”. It’s pretty clear from the gestures that the middle part of the conversation is about making challenges when the ball is already gone.

Although there is a time and place for it, players generally don’t like being yelled at or treated with disrespect, even when they may deserve it.

Model the behaviour you expect from players and good results will usually follow. If your model is constantly telling off, using a raised voice, yelling, etc, you shouldn’t be at all surprised when players respond in-kind.

Modified and adapted from a 2015 case study on theopinionofthereferee.com website

The Third Team's Psychology of Refereeing

Rule Number 1: Every Decision Counts

If there is one position in sport where every decision counts, it's as a referee. Often the difference between delivering a game successfully, making an error on a key match incident, or being selected for a cup final can come down to just one or two decisions. This is especially true at the elite level. Because of this officiating is now at a point where, tapping into the mental aspects of performance, has become widely accepted. **Mental Toughness** is an essential part of success, as a few, seemingly insignificant, decisions could mean the difference between achieving your refereeing dreams or missing out on them completely.

Despite this, most competitive officials love the fact that their part in sport is objective in nature. Refereeing is often instinctive when it comes to making decisions on the basis of what you see. However, this is also the hardest aspect of being an official. Because their success is so largely determined by results, referees often fall into the trap of focusing too much on outcomes. Where they'll place in the banding table or how close they are to earning a promotion are often front of mind. The consequence of this is that they forget about all the smaller processes required to improve and succeed. Officiating psychology being ones of these groups of processes.

Reflections of My Own Refereeing Career

I myself was an active referee, after a reasonably successful playing career and coaching several teams, taking up the whistle after having to referee one of my son's games. During my early career, I remember being midway through a season once only to give up when I saw that I was falling behind my colleagues. Looking back on this now, I realise that rather than focusing on the other officials and what they were doing, I should've been focusing on my game plans throughout the season and sticking to this just the way I had prepared in the lead up to matchdays. It's challenging not to become caught up in where we're ranked compared to the referees in competition with us for promotion. However, we need to have an understanding of what we have control or influence over, so that we can shift our focus from what we have minimal influence over (i.e. our colleagues) back to what we have maximum influence over (i.e. your game plan).

Why Is This So Important For Better Refereeing Psychology?

While we are more emotionally invested in our preferences or the outcome of a game, our level of influence over this is only small. We can't stop a player committing an act of violent conduct or serious foul play. What we can do however is employ the actions and processes we practice when we train and prepare so we can execute them to the best of our ability. And one way that we can enhance our ability, to be able to do this, is through formulating and practicing a game plan.

Whilst marks are important indicators of improvement and where our performance is currently at compared to others, having a game plan encourages us to align our focus, set our expectations and base our confidence on the things we do in training and preparation. A game plan accounts for all the smaller processes that go into the game. For example, getting ourselves into the best positions to recognise foul play.

With a significant commitment to practice and preparation, many of these above actions can become second nature, therefore, minimising on matchday decision making.

As performance coaches what we want to try and understand is what allows a referee to look back on their performance and confidently say that they gave it 100%?

If their answer is predominately outcome-focused, for example, "I didn't give it 100% because I didn't get everything correct", this is an issue. So, reframing their idea of a good performance so that it aligns with actions and effort becomes very useful. If their answer is "I know I gave it 100% because I gave myself the best chances on the field of play", well that's great, but what processes allow you to do this? Was it because you dealt well with foul play?

What Do Process Driven Game Plans Look like?

For referees who do not already have a game plan, creating an action-based checklist is a great way to empower them both in preparation for a game and on matchday.

Having the official evaluate their performance in terms of what aspects of their game plan they did and did not adhere to provides them with an opportunity for genuine improvement. They either acknowledge that although they may not have achieved the outcome, they had hoped for they understand there's nothing more they could have done. Or they recognise which aspects of the game plan they didn't stick to, how this impacted their performance and make arrangements to correct this for next time. Having them focus on these processes before and during the match essentially gets their head out of the way. It allows their body to do what it knows how to do and encourages them to take ownership of their performance and come up with ways to improve it.

Using Visualisation to Practice your Game Plan

Many people outside of refereeing don't realise the level of strategic planning that goes into a game. The same way a dancer would rehearse their choreography, or a diver would practice their competition dives, referee s practice their game plan at training to increase the likelihood that on matchday they can stick to it. However, what separates officials from many other types of athletes, is that they don't always have access to the setting where their performance takes place – the pitch. One way around this is through the mental rehearsal of their game plan, aka visualisation.

There's a whole range of reasons why an official might engage in visualisation. The most common is for the practice effects it has on performance. Visualisation can take place from the 1st or 3rd person and is a mental process whereby the referee uses imagery to rehearse the aspects of their performance "in their mind's eye". For a referee, this type of rehearsal would mirror their game plan and include when to take breaths, increase their sprint rate, change their sprint style and other processes which go into a match.

Have You Seen The Film, Cool Runnings?

Those of you who have seen the 1990's classic film, Cool Runnings will know what visualisation looks like when you think about the scene in the bathtub. (If you haven't seen it go and watch it and look out for the scene in the bathtub).

However, a referee who only visualises the ideal parts of their performance is setting themselves up for a hard time on matchday. There are more physiological variables. These include muscular fatigue and lactic acid build-up. It's really important to incorporate these physiological barriers into a visualisation routine so that we know how to respond to them if they occur on matchday. Visualising possible barriers to performance, when they're likely to occur and how you will respond to them will increase the likelihood that you'll be able to overcome these barriers to performance on matchday, as they will have been part of your rehearsed game plan.

As Referees, You Always Officiate How You Train

What makes game plan rehearsal so important, whether it is pitch based or through visualisation, is that with fatigue our attention, concentration and focus deteriorate. When this happens our chances of sticking to our game plan also deteriorate as doing this requires mental effort, leaving us with only physical strength and stamina to rely on to get us to the final whistle. But who would want to limit themselves to utilising only the physical aspects of performance when we have the opportunity to use this in conjunction with mental toughness?

In refereeing, you will officiate how you train. If you practice your game plan during and away from training, it becomes muscle memory just like any other skill. Over time, the processes become more automated and require less mental resources to execute, and in the last 10 minutes, this will make all the difference.

Modified and adapted from an article in The Third Team Blog by Nathan Sherratt

2020-2021 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 new 2020/2021 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.

August 2021 LOTG Quiz Answers: 1 - B; 2 - A; 3 - D; 4 - C; 5 - A; 6 - D; 7 - A; 8 - C; 9 - B; 10 - D.

Save These Dates

Friday 3rd September 2021 – Zoom meeting

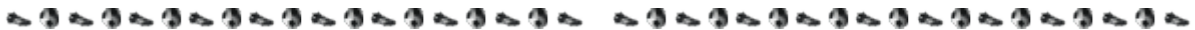
AGM - TBC

Note: Zoom meetings may replace in person meetings.



Showing Concern

Speaking to players who have been fouled can be smart refereeing. All you have to do is say something like "Don't worry I'll look after the problem". Similarly, when a player who has left the field of play to have an injury treated returns to play, the skilled referee will ask with a genuine and concerned smile "Are you okay?" Players generally do appreciate a sincere enquiry – it says that the referee is interested and supportive.



**Richard Baker - NSWSLFR TSC Member
and Newsletter Editor**

