

# The Game



## If You Are the Assistant Referee:

- Pay close attention to the referee during the pre-game conference. If you don't understand something the referee is saying, ask for clarification.
- Make sure you understand what the referee wants you to do in managing substitutions, how long to hold the offside signal, etc.
- Hold the flag in the proper hand. The flag should be held in the hand closest to the referee. Referees usually run a left diagonal, which means the flag will be in your left hand most of the time.
- If you turn sideways to walk up or down the field, switch hands with the flag as necessary so the flag is field side and the referee can see the flag clearly. The flag should always be switched hand to hand in front of you, below your waist, and not above your head.
- Make eye contact with the referee as often as possible throughout the game when you are not watching for offside or attending to other AR duties. If you see the referee making eye contact with you, nod or give a "thumbs up" (or something similar) to "answer" the referee.
- Stay even with the second-to-last defender (remember - the goalkeeper is usually but not always the last defender). This gives you the best position to make accurate offside decisions.
- Follow the ball all the way to the goal line so you'll be in position to see if the ball completely (even just barely) crosses the goal line. Following the ball to the goal line each time is an excellent habit to get into.
- When you're running a line, side-step so you stay square to the field as much as possible. This position allows you to continue to see the field and players. When you need to sprint hard to the goal line to follow play or the ball, then turn and run normally but still watch the field.
- Run to the corner flag, or close to it, when signaling for a goal kick or corner kick. Raising your flag yards away from the corner flag or goal line not only calls attention to the fact that you are not in the correct position to make that decision, but also carries with it the idea that you are either lazy or you don't care enough about the game to be in the proper position to make the call. However, there are times when the ball moves faster in the air than you can run – don't worry about it, just do the best you can to catch up.
- Follow the referee's pre-game directions on handling substitutions but, in particular, make sure that you have counted the players coming off and the substitutes coming on so that you don't wind up with too many players on the field.



- When signaling for a ball that is clearly off the field across the touchline, point your flag in the direction the throw-in will be taken (not straight up). This is very helpful for the referee in making a decision on which team last touched the ball and which team should be awarded the throw-in.
- Assist the referee in making sure the throw-in is being taken from the correct spot by pointing with your free hand to where the player should be standing when taking the throw-in. Be proactive, don't wait for the player to make a mistake, help them get it right.



### **If You Are the Referee:**

- You will probably do more games as an AR at first, but when you are assigned as a referee, remember to conduct a pre-game with your ARs. Tell them what you would like them to do in various situations, such as throw-ins, free kicks, goal kicks, etc. and make sure they understand what you are asking from them.
- Review offside and make sure the ARs have a clear understanding of the Rules of Competition for the league in which you are working.
- Be aware of your position on the field. It's tough enough to properly call a soccer match when you are on top of the play. It's impossible to make correct decisions when you stay close to or within the center circle. Even when officiating at the small-sided game level, get in the habit of being in the proper position and working hard.
- At first, you may have to remind yourself to lift the focus of your vision from the ball and the legs of the players so you learn to take in the whole area of active play. It is normal for new referees to have to make this conscious effort to lift their eyes. Once you are more experienced, it will be instinctive for you to see a large area of play if you condition yourself to do this from the beginning.
- Always think about your positioning - you should know why you are where you are. What do you gain by being in this position?

- Maintain good eye contact with your ARs throughout the game. A good habit to get into is to make eye contact with your ARs on every dead ball situation.
- If you are working a game alone, remember to appoint club linesmen to help you out with balls in and out of bounds. Club linesmen cannot call offside or fouls, so this means you have to work extra hard in the middle and concentrate to make sure you are covering offside on both ends of the field. You will have to adjust your diagonal accordingly when working alone so you are where you need to be. You should ask for a club linesman from each of the teams, rather than two from the same team.
- If you have only one official AR and will use only one club linesman, consider asking one team to supply someone for the first half and the other team for the second half.
- Make sure your hand signals are clear. Point the direction with a straight arm, fingers extended together.



- Blow clear and sharp whistles. Learn how to make your whistle “talk” for you.
  - Use the whistle to communicate control. Too many newly certified referees make a call with barely an audible "tweet" which tells everyone on the field that you are unsure of yourself. On your first call, give the whistle a firm blast and confidently point in the direction of the play. A firm whistle will eliminate 50 percent of the arguments. Vary the strength of your whistle depending on what happened – if there is a serious foul, for example, blow the whistle very loudly and/or several times.



- Be decisive in your calls. Players and coaches may try to take advantage of the situation if you seem unsure.
- Run the diagonal system of control when you have ARs assigned with you. The most accepted diagonal system is from the right corner to the left corner – referees refer to this as a “left diagonal” – but remember that this is not a straight line. Go where you need to go to see what needs to be seen.
- If you do not have ARs assigned and you need to use spectators as linesmen, ask them to only indicate when the ball has completely crossed over the touchline or goal line and not the direction of the throw or whether it is a goal kick or corner kick. That is your decision. Remember that “ball in and out of play” is the only thing they can call as club linesmen.
- At half time and after the game, review all the results (number of cards, scores for each team and any incident that occurred, as well as the information required to be reported by that particular league) so your game report is accurate.
- When you are working with more experienced officials, ask them for help after the game and discuss situations where you think there was a problem.

### Dealing with Problem Coaches:

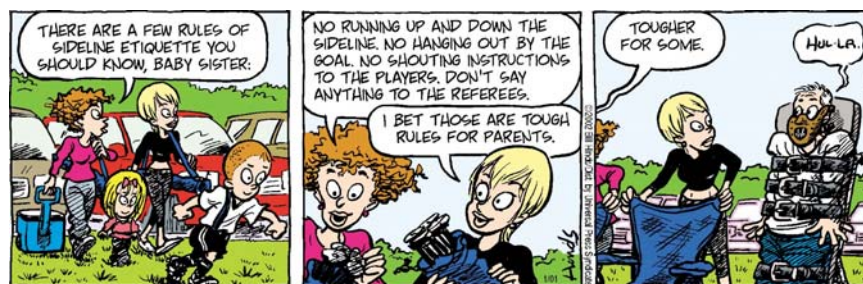
- Set the ground rules – be proactive
  - Show them where the team and the coaches will be seated. Make sure they understand that they must stay in that area.
  - If there is more than one coach, ask which coach will be giving instruction to the players and who will be asking for subs.
- Don't let the coaches intimidate you. Give them respect and ask for respect in return.
- Be confident in your knowledge of the Laws of the Game and Rules of Competition.
- Remain calm. If someone is hollering at you, don't yell back at them. Speak respectfully and quietly, so the coach must quiet down to hear you.
- Do not take someone yelling at you personally. It happens to all referees, even the most experienced. However, once the coach steps over the boundaries of the game and begins to make his comments personal or abusive, you must deal with it. Slowly and calmly walk over to the coach. In a polite and respectful way, inform the coach that this type of conduct is unsporting and continuing with this type conduct will result in his or her removal from the game. If the behavior continues – respectfully and professionally ask the coach to leave. If the coach refuses to leave, give the coach a warning that if he or she does not leave, you will end the game. If the coach does not leave in a reasonable amount of time (a few minutes), end the game. Be sure to file a very detailed report with the league so there is a good understanding of why the game was ended early.



### Dealing with Problem Players:

- Make your presence known from the moment you walk on the field - that way players know you are in charge. Stand tall, look people in the eye and smile confidently. Have your pre-game questions down - introduce yourself even if you have worked games with the same coaches before, ask for copies of the rosters, get the game ball from the home team and inspect it, check in players. (Do not tell players how you are going to call the game and what you are going to call and not call. This can cause you major problems later on.) Doing these game management things confidently will carry over into the game.
- Remember to blow the whistle with confidence, even if you are not feeling so confident, and use decisive signals with straight arms.
- If you have a difficult player dissenting or doing something else to disrupt the game, at a stoppage of play, issue a caution to them and let the player know that kind of behavior is unacceptable. If the player still insists on being difficult, use a well delivered warning to let them know that you have just about reached the limit of what you are going to take. It is often helpful to let the coach know this particular player is wearing out their welcome and the team may soon be playing short. Give the coach an opportunity to take care of the problem for you (perhaps by substituting out this player). If the bad behavior continues, issue a second caution and then a send off (red card). Remember that the proper procedure for this is to display the second yellow card and then the red.

- Remain calm when talking to players, but be firm in your voice and your decisions. Do not yell at players and never use foul or abusive language no matter what they are saying to you. Speak softly so the players must quiet down to hear you.
- Listen to what players are saying. Allow them to vent for a few seconds without calling it dissent, so long as it does not become abusive or personal (however, if you are the referee, never allow a player to vent at one of you AR's). You might find out about fouls you are missing, or there may be something else going on that can be easily corrected. This tactic also lets the players know you are willing to listen ...up to a certain point. This type of exchange should not go on often in a game and should be very brief (for example, in the "heat of the moment"). If it goes on longer, you must deal with it. The more experience you have as a referee, the easier it is to know how, when, and where to set boundaries.



### Dealing with Problem Parents

- Remain calm.
- Do not get into discussions or arguments with the sidelines.
- Enlist the support of the coach. Ask him to speak with the offending spectators and let him know that, if the behavior continues, the game will not. This will usually be enough to quiet most parents (other parents may understand the consequences and help with the problem spectator).
- If you have asked the coach to deal with problem parents and the situation continues, ask the coach to have the spectator leave the area. If the spectator refuses, tell the coach that, if the spectator is not removed, the game will end. Give the coach a reasonable amount of time (a few minutes) to deal with the situation. Remember, you cannot dismiss a spectator directly but must work through the coach or a tournament or league official.
- If the parent does not leave, you should feel free to end the game. Include any misbehavior on the part of the spectators in your game report to the league so that this type of behavior can be disciplined and stopped. Most leagues and state associations have methods for dealing with bad behavior, but doing so often requires a written report from the referee.

