

# Refereeing



## ***Decision-Making on the Field of Play***



Referee decision making during a game, is a fascinating and fraughtly complex area. Referees will approach, and deal with decision-making in their own individual ways, and will often rely on a combination of intuition and Law facts concerning play. Some Referees are capable of making instant decisions, whilst others do not like making important decisions without having first weighed up in their minds all the relevant information. Experienced Referees rely on their 'gut instinct', and their own automatic conscious or unconscious reactions when making judgments. Decisions made using instinct are very often proved to be correct.

Referees will make hundreds (and probably thousands) of decisions during every game. Each decision must be calculated in the very smallest fraction of time. The human mind is capable of making this quantity of decisions automatically without having to think about the rationale behind each conclusion. "When a Refereeing judgment is based on opinion, the ability to execute such a decision with conviction, relies on the unquestioning outcome of the players. If you can do this within the blink of an eyelid – and do it in such an authoritative way that it must seem correct at that time (even though others may have decided differently) – then football is your oyster!"

An astute Referee understands that there will be many decision-making situations in a game that do not neatly fit the answers provided by Law. The ability to interpret the Law is therefore an important asset in the Referee's power. It is not only a deep understanding of the 17 Laws of Associated Football that make a good Referee. It is the decision-making ability to use the Laws as the main component, in conjunction with the further ingredients of common sense, self-assessment, and post-match debate, the 'Spirit of the Game' and Fair Play.

There are many questions that a Referee will need answers to in his career. It is no good looking to FIFA as a single repository for 'official' answers because they do not have one that covers all scenarios – and to build one would constrict the human decision-making flexibility that each Referee relies on. In cases where there is no 'black-and white' answer to a question, an individual Referee will need to consider the opinions of others before he can feel comfortable with his own final version. Interpretation is an individual characteristic that enables two opposing answers to both be correct. The trick is to assess all of the information and advice around you and then make your own choice. Unless specifically mentioned in the Laws (or authoritative guidance), the individual Referee's interpretation just as correct as those black-and-white answers provided inside the Laws themselves.

Some self-assistance and self-preparation before each game, will undoubtedly help the Referee in:

(a) making consistent decisions, and

(b) lessening the chances of the Referee becoming anxious because he is not quite sure which way to give a decision - or

(c) helping the Referee to NOT react in instances where a decision is NOT required.

This article offers an insight into the process of decision making by Referees on the field of play. It also explores psychological preparatory work that the Referee can employ with himself to help his decision making capability - particularly in those situations where it is impossible for the Referee to make a correct decision, or where a decision is equally applicable to both teams at the same time! This article does not cover disciplinary decision-making (for example, to caution a player or not)? - But concentrates mainly on the play action of the game, and how the Referee controls that action by the application (and interpretation) of the Laws.

There are three main types of decision that a Referee will need to take during a game.

**1. Statutory decisions:** (The Laws of the Game)

**2. Interpretation decisions:** (How the Referee interprets the Laws)

**3. Impossible decisions:** (A 'best guess' or 'benefit-of-the-doubt' or equal decision)

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

# Statutory Decisions



Statutory decisions - are judgments based on the Laws of the Game - i.e. decisions that the Referee must make as prescribed to him by the Laws.

## Statutory examples are:

- (i) A player who strikes another player must be sent-off.
- (ii) A throw-in is the proper restart when the ball has traveled wholly over the touchline.
- (iii) If the Referee has awarded a goal, he cannot disallow that goal if play has been restarted.
- (iv) A goal cannot be scored direct from an indirect free kick.
- (v) A player cannot be offside if he receives the ball direct from a goal kick.

Making statutory decisions depends greatly on the Referee's knowledge of the Laws and keeping abreast with Law-change developments during his career. Statutory decisions are the easiest to make - because the Referee knows (or should know) beforehand, exactly which punishment or conclusion or outcome to apply. Referees should endeavor to refresh their memory of the Laws on a regular basis. It is very much like passing and studying for your vehicle driving test - when you first pass this test, the rules and situations concerning driving are easily remembered, but as time wears on, facts that once seemed perfectly clear or situations that were reacted to automatically, suddenly become muddled in the memory. Creating an aide-memoir can help a Referee to remember any particular problems that he has encountered in previous games.

Most of the Laws are easily remembered, and a Referee will cope with those automatically - but there are numerous other parts of the Laws that a Referee will never automatically remember when officiating at the beginning of his career. By simply listing down those vague Law areas on a piece of paper, and reading them before each game, the Referee will build up his knowledge of the Laws - which in time, he will be able to eliminate from his aide-memoir listing.

Having Refereed for some years, I still use my aide-memoir listing to remind me of any ultra-vague interpretations - and am still learning from each game. Refereeing is a life-long apprenticeship of constant learning, interpreting and application.

Some of my very first aide-memoir listings included:

***"When a free kick is taken inside the penalty area by the defending team, the ball has to come outside of the penalty area before it comes into play, and before another player can touch it."***

I clearly remember in one of my first games, a goalkeeper taking a free kick inside his own penalty area very near the penalty mark, tapping the ball to a colleague who continued on with play. As a new Referee, I could not instantly remember whether I should have allowed play to continue or not? If I had been allowed a few moments in the game to think about the correct decision, I would have stopped play, and asked the players to re-take the kick.

In my mind I knew the correct application of the Law, but I just needed a few moments to think about it. The 'moral' of this is – is that a Referee does not get "a few moments to think about it" - he is expected to make an instant decision - and he can only do this by experience and by recognizing his weaknesses, and by constantly strengthening his understanding of the Laws.

Of course, I can now know make this correct decision automatically, without having to think about it - but this is just one example that I listed on my early aide-memoirs. It was not very long before I crossed this one out, and replaced it with many others.

Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)

## ***Interpretation Decisions***



Football is a sport that allows its Referees a great deal of flexibility in interpreting and applying the Laws subjectively. Albeit that Referees are trained to be consistent in their application of the Laws - they are written in such a way, that the individualism of each Referee is allowed to flourish and enhance the game of football. Each Referee will have his own style, his own limits, and his own tolerance levels. This flexibility adds to the uncertainty, unpredictability and excitement envisaged in the game world-wide.

The Laws allow both the Referee and Football, to retain their human characteristics. Referees like the dual role of 'peace keeper' and 'adaptability'. This allows Referee characters to develop - this in turn, enhances the match excitement further. Interpreting the Laws is a skill gleaned from both experience, and by interacting with fellow Referees. Learning the Laws by rote and passing the Referees' exam is the easy bit. The hard part is applying the Law interpretations and dealing with man-management on the field of play. Common sense and Law interpretation used fairly and correctly identifies a good Referee from a bad Referee. Interpretation examples are:

- (i) Should a player who fouls another player always be cautioned?
- (ii) Is the attacking player standing in an offside position, actively involved with play?
- (iii) Was the tackle a completely accidental tangling of the players' legs?
- (iv) Was the handball intentional?
- (v) Can a Referee drop the ball to the goalkeeper alone?

**The quickest way for a new Referee to learn Law interpretation skills, is to:**

- (a) officiate in as many games as possible, and learn by experience:
- (b) interact with Referee colleagues. e.g. by joining and participating in Referee Societies, and reading Refereeing material.
- (c) learn by watching as many games as possible.

A new Referee who does none of the above, will undoubtedly take much longer to build up his interpretation and interpersonal skills. A Referee who does all the above, will swiftly improve his skills, and will quickly become acceptable within the footballing community.

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

## *Impossible Decisions*



There will be many occasions in every game, where it will be impossible for the Referee to make a correct decision. For example, when the unsighted Referee is 60 yards away, and the ball quickly ricochets out of a ruck of players and goes out for a throw-in. Throw-in to the attacking team, or throw-in to the defending team?

Another example, following a challenge for the ball between an attacker and a defender on the edge of the penalty area, the ball was seen to squirm off one of the players and deflects towards a second attacker who is standing in an offside position near the penalty spot.

Both of the players were taking a kick at the ball at the same time whilst making the challenge. In reality the defender made the last contact with the ball, a fraction of a second after the attacker. The Referee who is still catching up with play and is on the halfway line (50 yards away) does not have a clear view of the incident, but nevertheless needs to make a decision to either allow play to continue, or to stop play for offside.

Should the Referee allow play to continue, or should he penalize the offside attacker for being in an offside position when the ball was deflected (touched) to him by a colleague? (This question assumes that the Assistant Referee or Club Linesman is unable to help the Referee.)

When a Refereeing decision is required during a game - making a bad decision is better than making an unsure decision - and making a bad decision is certainly better than making no decision at all.

There will also be moments in every game when both teams are equally entitled to the decision. For example, whilst making a tackle to gain possession of the ball near the goal line - both the attacker and the defender touch the ball simultaneously before it crosses the goal line. Goal kick or corner kick?

During on-the-field impossible decision type incidents, when the Referee believes that both sets of players are as 'guilty' as each other, the option of a 'dropped ball' is usually an accepted method - so long as the dropped ball is not too near one of the goals or involves a goalkeeper in his own penalty area - in this case, the Referee would be better off giving the decision one way or another - (Referees usually give the benefit of the doubt to the defending team in situations of this nature).



There is much useful advice given to Referees to "keep up with play" - "make sure you are as fit as possible" - "try and attain a sideways view of play at all times" - "learn the Laws inside-out" etc. etc. The advice given here, is not to countermine such useful advice, but to provide the Referee with an additional structured psychological method that allows him to make an instant decision, when all the previous advice methods have failed.

This allows the Referee to feel confident with his judgment making - and completely rids his performance of those wavering decision making incidents, where players are very quick to criticize the slightest indecision. Players are certainly more receptive to decisive strong Refereeing (even when they know that some of the Referee's decisions were wrong), than they are too weak indecisive Refereeing.

**The secret of impossible decision making is to remember the following key phrases:**

- ▶ Be firm:
- ▶ Be quick.
- ▶ Be positive:
- ▶ Stand erect.
- ▶ Signal clearly.
- ▶ Do not waver.
- ▶ Do not be influenced.
- ▶ Make honest decisions.
- ▶ Your decision counts and nobody else's.
- ▶ You are right even if you are really wrong!
- ▶ Don't worry if everybody else thinks you are wrong – you're right!

Making impossible decisions depends on the individual Referee's perception, and his Default Automatic Method Navigator (D.A.M.N.) because you're damned if you do, and you're damned if you don't!). The Referee needs to agree with himself before each game, how to deal with the impossible. He needs to 'psyche himself up' to prepare for his impossible decision making role. It does not matter what name you call it (I have called it the D.A.M.N. method for ease of reference) but the players will look to the Referee to make all the decisions in a game - the easy decisions, the hard decisions and especially the impossible decisions.

A Referee who prepares himself with a standard method for dealing with impossible decisions, will eventually find that although impossible decisions are the hardest to make, they are probably the easiest to make - because he makes them consistently, quickly, without worrying and makes them automatically. This may seem like a contradiction - but let me explain. Firstly, the Referee must recognize that there will be many times during each game, where it is impossible to make the correct decision.

**This is due to a number of factors.**

- ▶ The speed of play:
- ▶ The distance between the incident and the Referee:
- ▶ The fitness of the Referee:
- ▶ Whether there are players in the Referee's line of sight:
- ▶ The shielding of the ball by the players' body:
- ▶ Whether there are any Assistant Referees or not:
- ▶ - and dare I say it "the Referee's eyesight"!

In situations of this type, the Referee can give the decision to the attacking team or he can give it to the defending team (or he can sometimes award a dropped ball). Some Referees automatically give 'unsure' decisions to the defending team - this is how it has been sportingly done historically in the past. For example, during an unsure throw-in, the Referee will give the benefit to the defending team, and award the throw-in to them.

Some modern Referees give 'unsure' decisions to the attacking team, thus embodying a modern movement to give the attackers the advantage, therefore increasing the chances of a goal being scored - which in turn will increase the enjoyment of the spectators. For example, if a Referee or an Assistant Referee is unsure whether an attacker is level or not with the second last defender during an offside judgment, then the benefit of the doubt normally goes to the attacker.

Other Referees will use a combination of the two paragraphs above, and give the benefit of the doubt during offsides to the attacking team, but conversely, give the benefit of the doubt during throw-ins to the defending team – this combination method is the most widely used.

Referees are advised before the game, to choose which of the (to the attacking team or to the defending team) D.A.M.N. methods to use when being unsure on which way to give a decision. Of course, the above advice also applies to the Assistant Referee, particularly when judging offside situations.

The Referee should not 'lose any sleep' worrying about whether he has made the correct decision or not during a game - so long as he has made an honest decision at that particular time. Even if the Referee (or Assistant Referee) makes the wrong decision - it is the right decision as far as the match is concerned, because the decisions of the Referee regarding facts connected with play are final. Impossible decision type incidents happen in a split second, and Referees have to make an instant judgment and continue onwards with the game. If a Referee shows any weakness or uncertainty when making decisions, the players, the crowd and the team's officials will certainly make the most of it! Be firm and positive and accept that you will make genuine honest mistakes, but that they are certainly not made on purpose.

Regardless of whether you decide to give the 'benefit of doubt' to the defending team or to the attacking team, or a combination of both, ALWAYS be consistent throughout each game.

When you have made a judgment on the field of play, even if in an instant you have the slightest doubt that you think you might have made the wrong decision, do not convey this to the players - be POSITIVE and do not change your initial decision.

There will be many times when you, as a Referee, will have to make decisions that are correct in Law, but nonetheless, decisions that you don't personally want to make. It has been noted that when Referees make these types of decisions, their head drops and their shoulders go forward. Stand upright with shoulders forward when making decisions – this will impart an authoritative confidence that will help you gain the co-operation of the players.

There will of course, be the odd times when as soon as a Referee makes a decision, he suddenly realizes that he is woefully wrong. (Don't worry when this happens - I've done it on many occasions, and still do.) Honesty is the key word here. In situations where the Referee has made a genuine mistake, he can change his decision so long as play has not restarted. Players are usually receptive to an honest mistake being rectified - the Referee just needs to admit that he was wrong in the first place.

Whether an impossibly made decision is really factually right or factually wrong does not matter. What does matter, is that the Referee always makes an honest decision - which in that fraction of a 'decision making second', seemed correct in his opinion, at that particular time.

**Question:** "When does play actually stop? Is it as soon as the Referee makes a decision to stop play in his mind? Or does play only stop at the precise moment when the Referee blows his whistle?"

**Answer:** There will always be a delay between the Referee 'making his mind up' to stop play, and the act of physically blowing the whistle. This delay, is not an excuse for the Referee to change his mind should two separate (but not simultaneous) infringements occur in very quick succession. For example – Yellow player impedes Red player.

Referee decides in his mind to stop play and award an indirect free kick to the Red team. ("Law 12 – an indirect free kick (IFK) is awarded to the opposing team if a player impedes the progress of an opponent.") But before the Referee has actually blown his whistle to indicate a stoppage of play – the Red player violently kicks the ankle of the Yellow player. The Red player should be sent off for committing a (Law 12) 'Violent Conduct' offence.

Play should be restarted with an indirect free kick to the Red team, for the initial offence of impedance. It is very important to note, that Referees' 'honesty' is paramount when making decisions of this nature. In other words – because the Referee had already agreed 'with himself' to stop play for the original impedance offence, he should NOT restart play with a (DFK) direct free kick (for the Violent Conduct offence) to the Yellow team. In cases where two offences are committed simultaneously by a player, Law 5 allows the Referee to punish the more serious offence. In cases where two offences occur in quick succession, the Referee is still obliged to issue the correct punishment. But he should not restart the game based on the second (DFK) incident, just because he was unable to get the whistle to his mouth quick enough to stop play immediately at the first (IFK) incident.

The only exception to this, is if following the first incident of impedance of the Red player, play continues to the advantage of the Red team, and the Referee applies (in his mind or by signaling) the advantage clause. In this case, because the Referee had allowed play to CONTINUE following the impedance offence, if he subsequently stops play because the Red player kicks the Yellow player – the restart is a direct free kick to the Yellow team.

To summaries this scenario – if the Referee stops play (in his mind or by blowing his whistle) for

the impedance, the restart is an indirect free kick to the team being impeded against (irrespective of what happens after the impedance.) If following the impedance offence, the Referee applies the advantage clause (in his mind or by signaling), play can be restarted in accordance with the nature of the subsequent, second offence (a direct free kick for Violent Conduct in this example.) Once the Referee has mastered the above methods for decision making, and gained more experience with his officiating - if a decision doesn't come naturally, then leave it - and allow play to continue.

The one factor that Referees have trouble with controlling when making rational decisions, is to make decisions independent of their physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual state in which they happen to find themselves before every game.

This can lead to Referees applying varying levels of tolerance towards players, and thinking to themselves: "You infringed the Law, but because I'm in a good mood today, and I like you, and the moon is in the correct position! – well maybe I'll let it go this once". This is human nature, and what makes us all so very interesting - and is beyond any help that I can give you, except be fair, and above all be honest.

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

## ***The Fourth Official***



The aim of this page is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Fourth Official's role. At the bottom of this page, you will find an extensive listing of what a Fourth Official's responsibilities are - this is dependant on which duties the match Referee wishes to assign to the Fourth Official. Nevertheless, the listing demonstrates the important (often-underrated) role that the Fourth Official often takes.

The higher the standard of football, the more responsibilities the Fourth Official will have. For example: - the extraneous duties expected at the top level (such as in an English Premier League match) include involvement with crowd security aspects in conjunction with the security staff, media relations, and onerous administrative procedures such as the procedural paperwork involved with substitutions etc.

The Fourth Official comes under the authority of the Referee at all times, and it is the Referee's duty to clarify what he expects his Fourth Official to do.

The Fourth Official must be made to feel part of the Referee's team, and not as sometimes happens, just a person to make up the numbers to comply with the Competition Rules.

### **History**

The Fourth Official is the newest breed of match official required to control the game of football (soccer), and as such, his role has developed slowly over the past few years.

He has now become an important, essential and active part of the Referee's integrated team. In 1991, the Fourth Official was officially introduced into the Laws of the Game. At that time, the Fourth Official's role was basically to take over from any of the three match officials, should one of them be unable to continue due to an injury. He was also asked to deal with administrative duties, control the replacement footballs, and to check the substitutes' equipment. The Fourth Official's role developed further over the ensuing years, giving him more responsibility and credence. In 1995, the Fourth Official was recognized as part of the officiating team.

In 1996 he was given the new responsibility of reporting any occurrences out of the vision of the Referee and the Assistant Referees.

## **FIFA Circular No. 585 April 1996 - Amendments**

### **The Role of The Fourth Official:**

**After the match the fourth official will submit a report to the appropriate authorities, on any misconduct or other incident which has occurred out of the vision of the referee and the assistant referees. The fourth official must advise the referee and his assistants of any report being made. This enhances the role of the fourth official as one of the refereeing team and facilitates the use of written evidence from the fourth official by the appropriate authorities".**

1999/2000 allowed the Fourth Official to communicate direct with the Referee, and not necessarily via the Assistant Referee (as had been the case in the past). Informing the Referee of unruly behavior from the Technical Area was also added at this time. This created an official direct relationship between the Fourth Official and the Referee. Fourth Officials then became an essential part of all top-level games.

In 2000/2001, the Fourth Official was given the new responsibility of informing the Referee if a player or substitute:

- (a) has been cautioned or sent off based on an incorrect identification:
- (b) has not been sent off despite having received a second caution: or
- (c) has committed violent conduct out of the view of the Referee and Assistant Referees.

In 2001/2002 Fourth Officials were allowed to approve a player's return onto the field of play, after the player had been treated for bleeding or blood on the uniform. Also, to check players in situations where they have been asked by the Referee to leave the field of play due to equipment problems. The evolutionary integration of the Fourth Official allows the Referee, his Assistant Referees, and the Fourth Official to form a stronger and more efficient team.

In 2002/2003 'The Board' approved that the Additional Instructions for Referees, Assistant Referees and Fourth Officials would now be printed in the Laws of the Game book.

The Referee, along with the rest of his team (Assistant Referees and Fourth Official) is responsible for controlling the game as efficiently, effectively, and unobtrusively as possible. Each official will have his or her own personality - and this plays an important part in the makeup of the team. Officials will develop their own style of conduct; it is the Referee's task to lead his team, and to harness the qualities of all his members within a common boundary of standard practices. An individual's style should not interfere with the Referee's control or the flow of the game.

It is important that the team establish clear communication between each other and the players (and the team managers) without causing undue attention to be drawn towards themselves and away from the match itself. After all, the spectators want to see a game of football, and not to witness officials who are trying to attract attention to themselves for one thing or another.

A common accolade often heard describing a match official, is when players or managers comment after the game: " **I didn't even notice you in the game**". But it must be remembered - that there will always be times when the match officials will need to make themselves know!

Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)

## ***What the Laws Say***



The Fourth Official may be appointed under the competition rules and officiates if any of the three match officials is unable to continue.

Prior to the start of the competition, the organizer states clearly whether, if the Referee is unable to continue, the Fourth Official takes over as the match Referee or whether the senior Assistant Referee takes over as Referee with the Fourth Official becoming an Assistant Referee.

The Fourth Official assists with any administrative duties before, during and after the match, as required by the Referee. He is responsible for assisting with substitution procedures during the match.

He supervises the replacement footballs, where required. If the match ball has to be replaced during a match, he provides another ball, on the instruction of the Referee, thus keeping the delay to a minimum. He has the authority to check the equipment of substitutes before they enter the field of play. If their equipment does not comply with the Laws of the Game, he informs the Referee.

The Fourth Official assists the Referee at all times.

He must indicate to the Referee when the wrong player or substitute

- has been cautioned or sent off based on an incorrect identification:
- has not been sent off despite having received a second caution: or
- has committed violent conduct out of the view of the Referee and Assistant Referees.

The Referee, however, retains the authority to decide on all points connected with play. The authority of the Fourth Official now also allows him to take action in situations concerned

with actual play. After the match, the Fourth Official must submit a report to the appropriate authorities on any misconduct or other incidents that have occurred out of the view of the Referee and the Assistant Referees. The Fourth Official must advise the Referee and his Assistants of any report being made. He has the authority to inform the Referee of irresponsible behavior by any occupant of the technical area.

## ***Routine and Responsibilities***



### **Arrival at the ground**

Invariably, at games in the lower leagues, the Fourth Official will very often be an experienced local Referee, purposefully chosen to make the traveling Referee and his two Assistant Referees welcome at the ground. Due to his local knowledge, the Fourth Official will probably already be familiar with the ground layout, the ground staff and team officials. It is very important in such circumstances, that the local Fourth Official should arrive at the ground before any of the other officials arrive - the other officials may have traveled some distance to the ground.

Be smart in appearance, and welcome your colleagues to the ground. Find out beforehand, where the officials' changing rooms are. Make yourself known to the ground staff and the team managers. This all helps to make any traveling officials welcome, and at ease when they arrive. Of course, the Referee, Assistant Referees, and the Fourth Official must all be at the ground at the time prescribed by the rules of competition, and at the very least 30 minutes prior to kick-off. Officials are recommended to arrive in good time. This will ensure that there is enough time to check the facilities, and to allow for any adjustments to be made to the field of play etc.

Close co-ordination by telephone with the Referee, in the days before the match, will allow the Officials to meet together as a team in plenty of time before the game starts. Referees usually like to follow a set routine before their games. This allows them to feel relaxed and comfortable, in the knowledge that when they enter the field of play, they are not flummoxed or panicking about something they have forgotten, or have failed to organize something properly. It is very important that the Fourth Official arrives in good time to allow the Referee time to properly brief all of his Assistants. The Referee will not be very pleased with you, if you arrive 5 minutes before kick-off, after he has briefed his Assistant Referees, and just as he is about to enter the field of play to start the game. The Fourth Official should participate fully in the Referee's pre-match brief. It is during this brief, that the Fourth Official will learn of his responsibilities - as meted out by the Referee. Some Referees like to deliver their pre-match brief whilst 'inspecting the field of play'. The Fourth Official should take special note of the Technical Area positions, during this pre-match field of play inspection. It is usual practice for the Referee, Assistant



Referees, and the Fourth Official to participate together in carefully inspecting the field of play to ensure the adequacy of markings, safety, general playing conditions, position of the benches, and to decide the best touchline position for the Assistant Referees to take. This ritual also allows the Referee to form a bond between his team, and gives the match officials time to discuss any particular game points.

The Fourth Official can be given the responsibility for obtaining and inspecting the match balls. Don't wait for the Referee to give you this responsibility - get to the ground early and complete this task before the other officials arrive.

The Fourth Official should be fully prepared at all times, to take over either as the Referee, or one of the Assistant Referees. The Fourth Official should ensure that he arrives at the ground with additional equipment such as spare flags, clip boards, coins, whistles etc.

### **Pre-match instructions**

The Referee will normally brief his Assistant Referees and the Fourth Official before the game commences. This will allow the Referee to instruct the other officials on what he expects them to do during the game, and to make clear what the responsibilities of each of the individual officials are. The briefing also allows the other officials to discuss and to help the Referee with his match plan. Most Referees are willing (and actively seek) input from all of their team. The contents of pre-match briefings are discussed on the Assistant Referee page on this web. The Fourth Official's particular responsibilities, are discussed throughout this 'Fourth Officials' page. The Referee will explain what signals he expects from his Assistant Referees' and Fourth Official. The competition rules should also be discussed. This will ensure that all the officials are aware of: Length of play? Whether extra time will be played if there is a draw? The number of permitted substitutes? Any particular competition variations to the normal rules? etc.

### **Fifteen minutes prior to kick-off**

Some competition rules require an inspection to be made of the players' equipment (look for earrings, finger rings, sharp damaged studs etc.) The Senior Assistant Referee or Fourth Official may be delegated to do this task by the Referee. Besides this, they may also be asked to check any 'Team-Sheets', and to ensure that any other pre-match paperwork has been dealt with correctly.

### **Some further Fourth Official pre-match responsibilities are as follows:**

- Ensure that the substitutes are seated (or located) in the correct place before the game starts.
- Keep the key to the officials' changing rooms on their person.
- Organize when the floodlights need to go on, and find out beforehand who is responsible for doing this.
- Check all the balls.
- Check and obtain and verify completion of the team sheets in good time.
- Agree with the Senior Assistant how substitutions will be dealt with, and what signals are to be used between themselves and the Referee.
- Clarify how to bring to the Referee's attention, any incidents on the field of play (or off the field of play) which merit a sending off. Seeking the Referee's attention can be managed through the Assistant Referee who is nearest to the Fourth Official. If the Fourth Official has seen a violent conduct incident on the field of play, which has been missed by the other officials, he can signal directly to the Referee, or he can approach

the nearest Assistant Referee and ask him to signal to the Referee.

Each Referee will have his own view on which tasks he wishes to delegate to the Fourth Official. A good Referee will ensure that the Fourth Official is made to feel an important part of the Team. The Referee should delegate important responsibilities to the Fourth Official.

I have been a Fourth Official on several occasions, and it is very easy to feel the odd-man-out in the team. Invariably, the Referee and Assistant Referee will have traveled to the ground together; they may already know each other from officiating in their local area league.

The Fourth Official can be made to feel unwanted - it has happened to me on several occasions. The Fourth Official can see himself as 'additional baggage' that the Referee has been foisted to accept. The Referee must not limit his conversation to his Assistant Referees, but must integrate all of his officials during conversations, especially those who may initially be shy or uncomfortable with any stronger personalities within the team. I remember one particular instance, when the Referee and his Assistants' obviously knew each other very well - they talked and talked and talked before the game. But they completely ignored me - the poor Fourth Official who was trying to make himself noticed in the corner of the changing room.

I felt unwanted. I felt as though my role was only ceremonial. I felt that I did not have anything particular to do except throw on the replacement balls. I felt that my colleagues were not interested in me. I felt that I was inferior to them. I felt like going home. These feelings affected my approach to the game, and I was confused as to what my responsibilities were (if any). Should I approach the groundsman to ask him to turn on the lights when it begins to get dark, or will the Referee ask him? Do I look after the substitutions? Who replaces the Referee, if the Referee becomes injured? etc. etc. etc.

Questions, questions questions. Needless to say, I did not enjoy the experience - but it has taught me the importance of integrating the team properly, particularly if one of the team is newly qualified, or is a youth Referee feeling his way in the game, or is just shy.

### **Immediately prior to kick-off**

The Referee and his Assistant Referees will enter the field of play together and move to centre spot for the 'tossing of the coin' ceremony. The Referee normally carries the match ball, introduces his colleagues to the team captains, and conducts the coin tossing.

In some competitions (and dependant on the Referees' pre-match briefing) the Fourth Official does not normally enter the field of play at the start of the game. Instead, he will be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the technical area are complied with before the game commences, and that the replacement balls are readily available. It is also important for the occupants of the technical area to be seated properly as soon as the game commences.

The Fourth Official should make a note of the time of kick-off in each half.

The Fourth Official would not normally make a final inspection of the nets before kick-off - this task is normally done by the Assistant Referees before they move to their touchlines in readiness for the start of the game.

During the game, the Fourth Official usually positions himself between the team benches. This allows him to keep an even view and control of both of the teams' substitutes and officials. It also serves to put a barrier between the benches, thus preventing incidents spiraling out of control.

A useful man-management trick, is for the Fourth Official to approach each technical area before the game starts, and say something like the following: " Is everything OK? Let me know when you want to make a substitution, and enjoy the game."

This allows the Fourth Official to let everyone know who he is, and to show that he is human, and approachable and in-charge !

The Fourth Official will very often have to take the jibing brunt from both sets of technical area occupants. He is the first official in the firing line of abuse and aggressive behavior emanating from the bench. A decision made by the Referee, or Assistant Referee on the field of play, can often be vented against the Fourth Official, who is a prime target for close combat!!

The Fourth Official will invariably be angrily asked to explain the Referee's decisions during a game. It is of no use trying to explain any of the Referees decisions to irate managers - they only hear what they want to. The best method of approach is to try and pacify such shows of aggression, by allowing the aggressors a few moments to vent their steam. It must be remembered that football is a very passionate and emotive game - without those two facets, it would not be the game that it is.

### **One minute before kick-off**

The Fourth Official should make a note of the kick-off time, and the relative position of the two Assistant Referees. He should also position himself to allow the Referee to see where he is standing. Try and make eye contact with the Referee - he may have left his coin or whistle in the dressing room, and you should be ready to help him. Keep a coin and a whistle and a watch on your person.

### **Thirty seconds before kick-off**

The Referee is responsible for supervising the clearing of the field of play - the Fourth Official can also help in this duty. The Referee should make eye contact with his Assistant Referees and the Fourth Official to ensure that everything is in readiness before he signals for the game to commence.

### **Kick-off**

The Fourth Official should make a note of the kick-off time. The Fourth Official should also start his stopwatch at the same time as the Referee starts the game. During the pre-match briefing, the Referee should have instructed the Fourth Official to either keep his watch running all the time, or to stop and start in conjunction with the Referee, thus keeping an accurate time for the duration of the half being played. It is advisable for the Fourth Official to have two stopwatches running. One that he allows to run continuously, and the other that he stops and starts in conjunction with the actions of the Referee. This will ensure that, should the Fourth Official fail to restart his watch after a stoppage, the continuously running watch will at least save his blushes, should the Referee ask him for remaining time!

The Fourth Official is responsible for ensuring that the occupants of the technical area are settled down as soon as possible. And to identify exactly where the replacement balls are being stored. The Fourth Official should then take a standing position between the benches, ensuring that both sets of managers and the Referee know exactly where he is. Do not stand directly in front of the benches, unless you want your head shouted off !

### **General Positioning**

The Fourth Official's positioning throughout the match can be varied. But he should aim to stay in the designated Fourth Officials position, or in the same position unless he is performing a specific duty elsewhere. If a seat is available in this area, this can be used, but normally he should stand throughout the match - unless the Referee has told him otherwise. Remaining in the same standing position will allow the Referee to locate the Fourth Official quickly if required. If the Referee has delegated the Fourth Official to take over from him, should he sustain an injury, it is important for the Fourth Official to keep warm and move about - but not to block the view of the technical area occupants.

The Fourth Official would not be expected to enter the field of play (apart from exceptional circumstances - for example, to prevent a manager or substitute attacking another player on the field of play).

The Fourth Official's position should generally be near the technical area - but he can (if circumstances warrant it) walk all the way around the field of play. For example, he may need to warn substitutes warming up in a prohibited area near one of the corner flags. If the Fourth Official sees a violent conduct offence that has been missed by the other officials, he may need walk along the touchline to gain the Assistant Referee's attention - to enable that Assistant Referee to signal the Referee.

### **During the game**

#### **The Fourth Official is responsible for the following:**

- Monitoring the further removal from the vicinity of the field of play (according to the rules of the competition) of any player sent off by the Referee. In this instance, the Fourth Official should not be over-officious, as this could exasperate an already tense situation. The Fourth Official's responsibility in this case, is to shepherd the player away, and monitor (and deal with) potentially aggressive approaches by other personal. Do not touch the player being sent-off.
- Keep proper match records such as noting which team kicked off first, the score and the time of kick-off etc.
- Keeping detailed notes of any cautions and sending-offs. Noting the time, number and if time allows the nature of the incident.
- The Referee usually delegates the control of the technical area (bench) to the Fourth Official. This will include management of any substitutions throughout the game, and controlling and bringing to the Referee's attention any misconduct emanating from the bench. Bring to the Referee's attention, incidents emanating from the technical area (bench) or from substitutes, such as, dissent, or offensive, insulting or abusive language committed by words, or actions (including gestures).
- Keep both of the technical areas under observation throughout the match. If a problem arises with the technical area occupants, the Referee will discuss the extent of the problem with the Fourth Official before taking the appropriate action. The objective for dealing swiftly with this type of behavior, is to protect the spirit of the game, and to maintain the authority of all of the officials. Do not expect the Referee to always agree with you - if you are overruled, support the Referee's decision. For instance, if the Fourth Official wants a member of the Bench to be sent-off, but the Referee decides to only caution the culprit, then the Fourth Official should 'bite his tongue' and not openly disagree with the Referee. The Referee is solely responsible for administering

disciplinary action in the match. Avoid giving any suggestion of resentment when the Referee acknowledges your advice but did not act upon it as you would have liked.

- Be constantly aware of the general movement and whereabouts of the Club officials, substitutes and any another team personnel. Do not become involved with match incident conversations that do not relate direct with the duties of the Fourth Official. Do not attempt to justify any of the Referee's decisions. The Fourth Official must be alert to attempts by team officials to engage him in argumentative discussion concerning decisions made against their team. The Referee is the final decision-maker on all matters concerning play. There will also be occasions when the Fourth Official will need to calm down abuse from the technical area occupants, directed towards the nearside Assistant Referee. In such cases, the perpetrators must be warned in strong terms to behave themselves. Situations where bad behavior or abuse warrants action by the Referee, must be brought to the Referees attention by the Fourth Official immediately, and dealt with accordingly.
- Look out for misconduct or other incidents that occur out of the view of the Referee and the Assistant Referees.
- Encourage celebrating players who have approached the technical area, to prepare for the kick-off without unduly wasting time. Any technical area occupants, who leave the area to give instructions to their players, should be asked to return.
- Monitor the time, and let the Referee have confirmation (or time remaining) by use of the usual discrete 'time-down' hand signals when required.
- Taking decisive smaller actions against the technical area occupants early in the game will very often prevent more serious situations arising later.
- The Referee should ensure that the bench occupants and the substitutes and managers know beforehand that the Fourth Official will be responsible for looking after them - although the Fourth Official himself, can make this known to the bench. This then allows the Assistant Referee on the 'bench side' of the field of play, to concentrate fully on the game and allows for greater responsibility and control of the 'Bench' area by the Fourth Official. Water containers should not be thrown onto the field of play, but passed to players from the touchline (if the Referee allows this)
- The Fourth Official is also responsible for indicating to the Referee when the wrong player has been cautioned because of mistaken identity or when a player has not been sent-off, having been seen to be given a second caution or when violent conduct occurs out of the view of the Referee and the Assistant Referees. The Referee, however, is ultimately responsible for deciding on all points connected with play.

### **Treatment of Injured Players**

Although the safety of the players must always be the main priority, concerns have been

and deal with players leaving and re-entering the field of play either to adjust their equipment, or when they have bleeding injuries or blood on their uniform.

If (in his pre-match instruction) the Referee has given the responsibility for checking players re-entering to the Fourth Official, the Fourth Official can decide when the equipment or bleeding has been properly dealt with. He can signal the Referee himself, when a player is ready to re-enter the field of play (or he can ask the nearest Assistant Referee to signal the Referee on his behalf. The return of players into the field of play should be done as soon as possible, and when the Referee has signaled a suitable moment for re-entry. Players should not be allowed back on the field of play until the Referee has beckoned them on by a clear signal, and only after play has been restarted.

If the Referee specifically wants to take the responsibility of checking the players himself, then the Fourth Official should signal to the Referee when the player is ready to be checked prior to re-entry.

Players who have left the field of play to have their equipment adjusted, are only allowed to re-enter during a stoppage in play. (See Law 4)

Players who have left the field of play to be treated for an injury, can re-enter on the Referee's signal during play, but the returning player must enter along one of the touchlines - he is not allowed to enter along the goal line (unless play is stopped).

When an injury occurs, the Fourth Official should prevent team officials (or the technical area occupants) from rushing onto the field of play without the Referee's permission. Use gentle persuasion to achieve this. The trainer should only come onto the field of play after receiving a signal from the Referee. Use discretion when small children are concerned, and do not be over-officious if trainers or parents rush onto the field of play to comfort a small child.

To prevent unnecessary aggravation prior to sorting out problems (such as requesting substitutes to warm up in a different area), the Fourth Official can engage the help of the team manager or coach, rather than directly approach the substitutes himself. If there is undue interference or improper conduct by the Fourth Official, the Referee will relieve him of his duties and make a report to the appropriate authorities.

## **Substitutions**

Be prepared to deal with substitution requests at any time during the game. The Fourth Official can be delegated the task of checking the players equipment before entry onto the field of play.

Organize and control all substitutions. Make a note of all proceedings. Check the substitutes' equipment before they enter the field of play on the halfway line. If their equipment does not comply with the Laws of the Game, the Fourth Official must inform the Referee, who will take the appropriate action. The Senior Assistant Referee is normally responsible for indicating to the Referee when a team wishes to make a substitution. But where a Fourth Official is available, this responsibility could be shared between the Fourth Official, and the Assistant Referee.

Check that the substitutes have been named on the official listings before being allowed onto

the field of play. If both teams are making substitutions at the same time, keep the substitutes on their respective technical area sides. If display boards are available, use them to show the number of the player leaving the field of play, and the number of the substitute player entering the field of play. Only allow the substitute to enter the field of play, after the exiting player has left it.

Monitor substitutes when they are warming up - particularly if they are near (and interfering with) one of the Assistant Referees.

Prevent and deal with anyone (particularly substitutes) who interferes with the match officials.

### **Half-time**

The Fourth Official should monitor the vacation of both of the technical area (or benches) occupants, and ensure that no confrontation takes place whilst players are making their way to the changing rooms. After gathering any equipment (records, sign boards etc), and checking that the match ball is in the possession of the Referee, the Fourth Official should wait on the side of the field of play (unless the exit to the changing rooms is on the far side) and join the other match Officials before making his way to the officials' changing room as a team to discuss any match points and compare records.

Before the commencement of the second half, the Fourth Official should position himself between the technical areas (or benches) in good time to monitor return of the occupants. He is also responsible for managing and notifying to the Referee, any substitutions being made during the half-time interval.

Substitutes entering the field of play at the start of the second half, should wait at the half-way line with the Fourth Official, before being ushered onto the field of play after receiving the Referee's signal. The Fourth Official should also note in his records, the particulars of those players who have been substituted.

### **Extra-time**

If extra time or the 'Golden Goal' is to be played, the Fourth Official should remind the occupants of the Technical area of the requirements of these periods of play. Prior to arriving at the game, the Fourth Official must make himself conversant with the competition rules for each game, and assist the Referee in ensuring that any transition between full time to extra time (or Golden Goal) is made in an organized way.

During kicks from the penalty mark, the Fourth Official can assist in ensuring that substitutes and team officials do not enter the field of play. He should also make a note of which players have taken kicks, and keep a result of the score (just in case the Referee gets in a muddle).

### **Full-time**

The Fourth Official should once again, monitor the vacation of both of the technical area (or bench) occupants, and ensure that no confrontation takes place whilst players are making their way to the changing rooms. He should wait on the side of the field of play (unless the exit is on the far side) and join the other match Officials before making his way to the officials' changing room as a team to discuss any final match points and compare records.

In some cases, the Fourth Official will ensure that the match balls have been recovered. The Referee will compare match notes with the Fourth Official and his Assistant Referees, to ensure that no match details have been missed.

### **After the match has ended**

Ensure that all of the equipment under the responsibility of the Fourth Official is gathered and returned to the correct place. Retrieve any balls if necessary - including the match ball (if this is not already under the control of the Referee). Join the Referee and the Assistant Referees as soon as possible, and do not get involved with players or team officials attempting to discuss match incidents.

Check and confirm match records with the Referee and the Assistant Referees in the confines of the officials' changing room. If there are any incidents that the other officials have missed, these must be imparted to the Referee for inclusion in the match report.

The Fourth Official should participate fully in any after-match discussions between the officials and any assessor. Review of post-match incidents is essential to team fulfillment and understanding. The match officials should stay together as a team until they leave the stadium or the ground. This will lessen the chances of being singled out and abused or harangued by irate players and team officials.

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**



## ***List of Fourth Official's Responsibilities***



- Arrive at the ground, and in the officials' changing room early, and at the appropriate expected time. Dress smartly and in a confident manner.
- Assist the Referee to approach the game calmly and confidently. Adopt a friendly and fully co-operative attitude towards your Refereeing colleagues.
- Give the Referee every possible support, before, during and after the match. Keep eye contact with the Referee at all times during the game - this indicates that all matters under the Fourth Official's responsibility are under control.
- Be conversant with the competition rules before each game.
- Take proper notice of the Referee's pre-match briefing, and politely clarify any uncertainty arising.
- Have all the expected Referee accoutrements in you pockets; such as spare whistle, notebook, tissues, coin etc.
- Carry out the duties delegated by the Referee, properly, smartly, efficiently and pleasantly.
- Participate fully in the Referee's pre-match and post match brief.
- Take responsibility for anything delegated by the Referee.
- Sort out the Referee's changing room supplies by interacting with the facility manager.

- Accompany the Senior Assistant Referee whilst he inspects the players' equipment before the game has started. (Checking players' equipment will depend on competition rules).
- Identify the Team Managers and Coaches, and discuss with them, substitution procedure, warm-up areas and injury procedures. And clear up any ambiguities concerning the Competition Rules.
- Assist with any administrative duties before, during and after the match, as delegated by the Referee.
- Obtain, and supervise the replacement footballs, where required. If the match ball has to be replaced during a match, provide another ball, on the instruction of the Referee, thus keeping the delay to a minimum. Speak to any 'ball-handlers' particularly about entering the field of play and retrieving extra balls on the field of play. Remind the ball-handlers of their neutrality.
- Be fully prepared at all times, to take over either as the Referee, or one of the Assistant Referees. Conscientiously prepare yourself for either the Assistant Referee's role, or the Referee's role, should any of them become injured.
- Inspect the substitutes' equipment prior to entry onto the field of play. (This will depend on the requirement of the competition rules).
- Be the focal point for persons other than players, substitutes and team officials (e.g. stadium staff, security staff, ball-persons).
- Collect any Team Sheets prior to the game, and pass them on to the Referee.
- Make a note of the captains' numbers before the game commences.
- Organize relevant paperwork during substitutions and verifying that the information is correct. And check that the substitutes have been named on the official listings before being allowed onto the field of play. Record the time of any substitutions.
- Inform the nearest Assistant Referee of any substitution request. Seek his help if needs be, to signal the Referee.
- Stand at the halfway line, by the halfway line flag with the substitute until the Referee signals for the substitution to take place. Use your common sense on local grounds where substitutes can sometimes forget that they must enter on the halfway line; or where there is no properly designated technical area.
- Be prepared to deal with substitution requests at any time during the game.
- If display boards are available, use them to show the number of the player leaving the field of play, and the number of the substitute player entering.
- Allow the substitute to enter the field of play - but only when the outgoing player has left the field of play.
- Having completed the specific substitution monitoring duties, quickly take up your normal position between the technical areas (or benches).

- Monitor substitutes when they are warming up - particularly when they are near (and influencing) one of the Assistant Referees.
- Check the equipment of substitutes before they enter the field of play. If their equipment does not comply with the Laws of the Game, inform the Referee.
- When the end of time approaches, pass clear 'time remaining' signals to the Referee, preferably during natural stoppages of play. Indicate the last 5 minutes with appropriate number of fingers pointing downward against the background of the shorts. Time expired, signal = closed fist on the shorts, or fist to the chest (arm across the chest).
- Note the added time to be played at the end of each half - as indicated by the Referee. Advertise this additional time by the display of number boards etc. (This only applies to top-level games).
- Supervise the departure of the teams or/and bench personnel at the end of each half.
- Wait on the side of the field of play and meet the Referee at the end of each half, by quickly joining the Referee when he/she blows the whistle for half-and full-time.
- Leave the field of play with the other officials, as a team, and after the two opposing teams have departed or have otherwise ceased all competitive activities.
- Proceed to the officials' changing room at half-time and at full time to discuss match details in a calm post-match discussion in privacy. Clarify any misunderstandings, confusion or breakdown of teamwork that occurred during the game, and agree what should be done about any misunderstandings.
- At half-time and at full-time, check that the match ball is in the possession of the Referee - if not, then retrieve it.
- Avoid giving any suggestion of resentment when the Referee acknowledges your advice but did not act upon it as you would have liked.
- Work together as a team, and always back up the Referee's decisions.
- Prior to sorting out problems (such as requesting substitutes to warm up in a different area), to prevent unnecessary aggravation, the Fourth Official should engage the help of the team manager or coach, rather than directly approach the substitutes themselves.
- Don't comment or talk to the crowd or to the managers in such a way that will antagonize them.
- Retain a sense of humor.
- Be polite at all times to all people.
- Keep out of the way of the spectator's viewpoint and take the proper action if they encroach. The home team is responsible for the behavior of the spectators – seek

help from the ground staff or security staff to deal with this.

- Keep alert always.
- Recognize and immediately respond to any gesture from the Referee that conveys his need for your assistance or advice. For example, the Referee may signal the Fourth Official to organized the turning on of the floodlights, due to inclement darkening weather.
- Record the name (if team sheets are available), and club identity of any player who has been disciplined by the Referee during the match. After the match, submit a report to the appropriate authorities on any misconduct or other incident that has occurred out of the view of the Referee and the Assistant Referees. Advise the Referee and his Assistants of any report being made.
- Keep alert and deal with players leaving and re-entering the field of play either to adjust their equipment, or when they have bleeding injuries or blood on their uniform. If given this responsibility, check the return onto the field of play, those players who have been treated for bleeding wounds or blood on the uniform, or after a player's equipment has been adjusted.
- When an injury occurs, prevent team officials (or the technical area occupants) from rushing onto the field of play before receiving the Referee's permission. Players should be prevented from re-entering the field of play until the Referee has beckoned them on by a clear signal. Use gentle persuasion to achieve this. Use discretion when small children are concerned, and do not be over-officious if trainers or parents rush onto the field of play to comfort a small child.
- Manage the Technical Areas, and keep both of them under close observation throughout the match.
- Inform the Referee of any unruly or irresponsible behavior committed by the technical area occupants.
- Inform the Referee if a player or substitute (a) has been cautioned or sent off based on an incorrect identification: (b) has not been sent off despite having received a second caution: or (c) has committed violent conduct out of the view of the Referee and Assistant Referees.
- Always Keep players, substitutes and team officials under observation. Be aware of the general movement and whereabouts of the Club officials and any another team personnel throughout the game.
- Only authorized personnel are allowed inside the technical area. Remove any unauthorized personnel.
- Any technical area occupants, who leave the area to give instructions to their players, should be asked to return. Always speak in a professional and calming manner.
- Taking decisive smaller actions against the technical area occupants early in the game will very often prevent more serious situations arising later.
- Prevent and deal with anyone else who interferes with the match officials.
- Prevent water containers from being thrown onto the field of play. These can be

passed to players from the touchline (if the Referee allows this).

- Remain in the same standing position during the game (unless performing another duty). This allows the Referee to locate the Fourth Official quickly if required.
- Keep an eye on the behavior of the 'ball-persons' (for example, ensure that they do not show favoritism to one team. Or enter the field of play etc.)
- Do not become involved during the game, with match incident conversations that do not relate direct with the duties of the Fourth Official. Maintain a professional composure throughout.
- The Fourth Official should participate fully in any after-match discussions between the officials and any assessor.

The responsibilities shown above, increases the authority of the Fourth Official and allows him to take action in situations concerned with actual play, and with situations not concerned with actual play.

The listing above serves to remind you of the complexities of being a Fourth Official.

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

## ***Bench Laws***



This page refers particularly to matches played in stadia with a designated seated area for technical staff and substitutes. 1a. The Technical Area details as shown in the Laws of Associated Football are as follows:-

### **Law 3 Decision 2.**

A team official may convey tactical instructions to the players during the match and must return to his position immediately after giving these instructions. All team officials must remain within the confines of the technical area, where such an area is provided and they must behave in a responsible manner. Tactical instructions may be given by different team officials during the match provided the person returns to his or her position after giving these instructions and behaves in a responsible manner.

Technical areas may vary between stadia, for example in their size or location. The following notes are issued for general guidance.

- The technical area extends 1 meter (1 yard) on either side of the designated seated area and extends forwards up to a distance of 1 meter (1 yard) from the touch-line.
- It is recommended that markings are used to define this area.
- The number of persons permitted to occupy the technical area is defined by the competition rules.
- The occupants of the technical area are identified before the beginning of the match in accordance with the competition rules.

- Only **one person at a time** is authorized to convey tactical instructions and they must return to their position immediately after giving these instruction.

## ***Extra Hidden Details***



The following details can also relate to grounds where there is no specifically marked "Technical Area".

- 2a. Although competition rules should state exactly who is allowed in the "Technical Area", invariably they don't - and you will have to use your common sense. Luckily, most 'Benches' can only 'just about' contain the substitutes and a manager.
- 2b. Again, use your common sense if there are no markings to define the "Technical Area".
  - 2c. A Referee - from the moment they step onto the field of play before the start of a game, to the end of the game, including any half-time or extra-time intervals - can Red/Yellow card a substitute. They can also report - at any time - misconduct committed by a Club Official, who can then be instructed (under the Referees' Powers, Law 5) to leave the 'dug-out' to an area away from the touch-line and the near vicinity of the field of play. If a person responsible for treating the needs of the players is disciplined, they may be allowed to stay within the 'Technical Area' - to administer any treatment during the game.
  - 2d. It can sometimes be very difficult to identify whether a person within the "Technical Area" is an official or just a supporter. Be polite when enquiring.
  - 2e. The Referee can make the 'Fourth Official' responsible for 'looking after' the 'Bench', this could include the management of substitutions throughout the game, and controlling and bringing to the Referee's attention any misconduct emanating from the 'Bench'. If the Referee wishes to make the Fourth Official' responsible for the 'Bench', then they should inform the substitutes and officials of this decision. This then

allows the Assistant Referee on that side of the field of play to concentrate fully on the game and allows for greater observation and control of the "Bench" area by the Fourth Official.

- The Fourth Official assists the Referee at all times. He must indicate to the Referee if a wrong player is cautioned because of mistaken identity or when a player is not sent off having been seen to be given a second caution or when violent conduct occurs out of the view of the referee and Assistant Referees. This increases the authority of the Fourth Official and allows him to take action in situations not concerned with actual play. The Referee, however, retains the authority to decide on all points connected with play.
- 2f. Tell the 'Bench' to let **you** (the Assistant Referee) know when a substitution is required. Raise and hold your flag above your head, when the ball goes out of play, to attract the Referee's attention. The outgoing player must be off the field of play before the substitute can enter at the half-way line. Ensure that you have a list of the nominated substitutes before the game commences. Make a note of the ongoing substitutes names and numbers.

Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)



## ***Nuisance Factor***



## Common Sense



- 4a. It's up to the individual Referee, as to which touchline his Assistant Referees run. There is nothing in the Laws to stipulate otherwise.

The Referee will normally run a diagonal from one corner flag to the other, diagonally across the field of play during the game. The Assistant Referees will be asked to run respective touchlines, depending on which diagonal the Referee runs during a game.

Most Referees like to keep their Assistant Referees patrolling the same touchline in both halves of the game. But some Referees ask their Assistant Referees to swap touchlines in the second half, and some have been known on the odd occasion to make their Assistant Referees run the far end of the same touchline that they patrolled in the first half. The general method is to keep Assistants on the same touchline throughout the game - the senior Assistant normally takes the 'Bench' side (because he is more experienced in dealing with unruly 'bench' occupants.)

Some points for the Referee to consider before deciding which touchline his Assistants should run are:

Look for the 'geography' of the respective 'Benches' during the pre-match pitch inspection. Is the technical area marked? Are the 'dug-outs' near to each other? Are they big enough to contain the permitted occupants - if not, where will the occupants stand? Are they allowed to stand? Is one bigger than the other and better equipped thus giving an advantage to one team? Will the Assistant Referee run past the 'benches' on his allocated touchline or near enough to control and keep an eye on them?

- 4b. Be courteous at all times to both substitutes and officials (and the crowd), even in the face of extreme provocation. A polite : -"Hello, everything OK? - let me know when you want a sub. on", will allow you the first chance to use your man-management skills in making a first impression before things start to go wrong. Do not create any ill-feeling or conflict by trying to be officious or petty with 'Bench' officials.

- 4c. Treat any proper enquiry's from the 'Bench' in a polite way - but be firm when the queries become heated or vigorous. Beware of constant requests for "**How much time left linesman !**" You could also 'glower' at any perpetrator, or inform the occupants that you have reached the end of your tolerance, and will bring to the Referee's attention, any further trouble. Tell them that the Laws of the Game state that they must behave in a responsible manner, this also refers to officials and substitutes congregating around the field of play when there is no recognized 'Bench'.

- 4d. You can usually ignore most of the usual 'Bench' banter, but **you ignore ALL comments at your peril**. Don't ignore challenges to your authority because they can destroy a game. Try and stamp down on bad behavior as soon as you can, by acting firmly with any culprit. This will prevent any escalation. Do not tolerate threats of any kind - bring these to the attention of the Referee as soon as you can.

- 4e. There are a lot of genuine, responsible good humored officials who are prepared to work with us and not against us. These will give you no trouble, and can sometimes add to the enjoyment of the game, so try to remember that it is not all doom and gloom - keep your sense of humor.

Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)

## ***How to Assist***



- 5a. The Referee will require all the help they can get when dealing with any 'Bench' trouble. The Assistant Referee needs to be observant and absolutely certain who is involved and what has been said or done during periods of trouble from the 'Bench'. Any mistakes in identifying the culprit, could affect both the Referee's and Assistant Referees' ability to control the rest of the game. The Referee should not 'hide' if an Assistant Referee colleague is having difficulty with any persons' within the 'Bench' area - or ground, including spectators. The Assistant Referee cannot act on his own and must allow the Referee to personally deal with any misconduct as the Referee deems fit.
- 5b. The Referee and Assistant Referee will need to consult each other away from prying ears before any action is taken. When action has to be taken on the say-so of the Assistant Referee - **it must be done as a team**, with both officials approaching the 'Bench' together. The Referee is responsible for any necessary disciplinary action or warnings; the Assistant Referee should remain quiet and act as an observer. Removing any awkward official from the 'dug-out' into the stand may be sufficient to stop further trouble.
- 5c. If there is absolutely nothing happening in a game, it is very easy for the Assistant Referee to lose concentration on the field of play, and start 'poking their nose' into the 'dug-out'. **DON'T** go looking for trouble, because if you do, you'll certainly find it on the 'Bench'. The last thing a Referee wants is to get involved with the 'Bench'. Don't invite conversation or respond to alleviate any boredom.
- 5d. The Assistant Referee needs to develop a good rapport with the occupants of the 'Technical Area' without letting any conversation distract him from the main task

of knowing exactly what is happening on the field of play.

- 5e. Assistant Referee's must completely ignore any 'wind-up' comments about the Referee's decisions on the field of play; the best response is to carry on as if nothing is being said - unless of course the comments are foul mouthed.

### **Questions and Answers:**

**Question.** What is the actual rule for managers standing outside the zone in front of the technical area dugouts. I have seen managers stand outside this area, yet the 4th official seemed to not really do anything about it. One manager actually stood a few yards on the pitch, but this was during a substitution. So, is there actually any punishment for managers coming out of their area (I assume they can be sent from the touchline), and can they stand on the field of play, as long as the ball is dead?

**Answer.** The Law states that one team official at a time may convey tactical instructions to the players during the match and must return to his position after doing so. All team officials must remain within the confines of the technical area, where such an area is provided and they must behave in a responsible manner.

Tactical instructions may be given by different team officials during the match provided the person returns to his or her position after giving these instructions and behaves in a responsible manner. The occupants must stay within the technical area, except in special circumstances, for example, a trainer entering the field of play to administer treatment to a player (with the Referee's permission).

Punishing minor infringements can actually escalate problems. Football is an emotive game and passions will run high. The Referee has the power to remove any occupant if the occupant's behavior warrants it. They must behave themselves in a responsible manner. The Fourth Official is responsible for informing the Referee when the occupants misbehave – but a great deal of man-management is required on the Fourth Official's part to pacify irate managers etc. The number of persons permitted to occupy the technical area is defined by the competition rules.

But as with life, a modicum of common sense is applied when dealing with the technical area. This is a very difficult part of the Referee's responsibility. It must be said, that when problems arise, they are created by the occupants. It is those occupants who have a responsibility to behave themselves, and when they misbehave, it is they who are a total disgrace. So let's not blame the Referee for such behavior, or for using his man-management skills for dealing with infringements. We are talking about grown men here, who would not dream of behaving like this in the street or elsewhere in public. If they did, they would be locked up!

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

## ***Gamesmanship***



The aim of this page is to show how the Referee - can identify and deal with Gamesmanship in the world of Football/Soccer.

### **What exactly is Gamesmanship?**

Gamesmanship occurs when a player attempts to profit from an unfair advantage, or when he disguises an unjust act done on purpose; or when he commits any unsporting act executed in a sly way contrary to 'the spirit of the game'; or when he resorts to psychological intimidation against his opponent - these are just a few flavors of the sour forms of gamesmanship.

The ethos of sport should embody a simple way for people to keep themselves amused and healthy - sadly, modern sport is becoming increasingly reliant on business and financial survival, and less and less a 'sport' in the true sense of the word.

Sportsmanship has less and less importance in the world of professionalism; it is about winning at all costs. Winning has become almost as important as life - sometimes more so. Footballers (and managers and coaches) have no qualms about introducing deceiving (or even fair) tactics that deviate from the rules and the spirit in which the game is supposed to be played in. It is more about succeeding in today's society and not so much about whether such acts are right or wrong. To succeed in any profession today, inevitably means bending the rules from time to time.

The attitude of "I'll do anything to help my team win," can be seen in every game of senior football. Players who resort to gamesmanship, and are penalized by the Referee, should never bemoan that they have taken their chance, but have been caught out by an astute Referee. Players have become very adept at psyching up opponents by holding, shoving them, taunting

them, tripping them, pulling shirts - and all done whilst the Referee is otherwise occupied. And how about the favorite goalkeepers' trick of raising a boot and one knee high when rushing out and jumping up to catch the ball. This gives a clear message to any attackers, to not to come anywhere near the goalkeeper when he is attempting this maneuver. Is this gamesmanship? Or is it cheating, and can Referee do anything about it? (Only if it is deemed to be dangerous play.) This is just one subtle gamesmanship ploy in the players' armory of a thousand quivers.

**"Albeit that most Referees know the Laws of the Game inside out - players are just as adept at knowing how far to bend them."**

## ***Laws Covering Gamesmanship***



Law 5: The Authority of the Referee and his Powers and Duties, allows Referee discretion for any infringements of the Law. Gamesmanship is a subtle ploy only punishable by the authority of the Referee - and nobody else. Identifying what is gamesmanship, and what is not gamesmanship, and what is cheating - is a difficult skill to administer. Gamesmanship first reared its head in the sporting world of tennis, where it was quickly perceived that a lesser skilled opponent was able to defeat a more skilled player by applying constant distraction, complaining about line calls, delaying serve, tying up their laces, inciting the crowd, making strange body movements and many other 'ungentlemanly' dupable acts intended to break the flow and concentration of the more skilful and focused opponent - without actually resorting to cheating or breaking the rules.

The USA World Cup is where the 'seed of shirt pulling' emanated from.

Law 12 lists the punishments for fouls and misconduct. The modern game has been infiltrated by several novel ways to deceive the Referee. Shirt pulling incidents peaked during the 1998 World Cup in France to such a degree, that it now appears in all levels of the game. Players have become adept at pulling shirts on the 'blind side' of the Referee. These are subtle ploys committed in the hope of gaining an advantage without having to resort to a full-blown illegal method. Simulating fouls, commonly known as 'diving' (especially by an attacker in the penalty area) are so realistic, that swimming judges could not fail to award full marks: Feigning injury to waste time or to stop the flow of the opposing team: Substitutions, in the last seconds of a game: Inflammatory (and sometimes racist) remarks between players: Players constantly haranguing the Referee: These are just a few of our modern gamesmanship warts. How can the Referee decide what is unsporting behavior (gamesmanship), and what is not?

Law 13 - Free Kicks. The array of gamesmanship here is limitless: Delaying the taking of a free kick by many methods: Questioning the Referee thus delaying restarts even further: Questioning the position of the ball: Jostling for position in the 'wall': Subtly moving the ball to a more advantageous position: Asking for a substitution to be made at a crucial stage of the game; and many more untold methods, some of which can be punished by the Referee by Law, and some which can't! For example: (the score is Red Team 1, Yellow team 0, last minute of the Cup Final) - just before the taking of a Yellow team free kick towards the Red team's goal, a Red team player prevents the quick taking of the free kick by walking slowly up towards the referee and says; "Ref., I'm injured, can I be substituted please? "What can the Referee do? Is it gamesmanship that can be punished, or is it a genuine request?

Law 14 - The Penalty Kick. How many times have we seen the goalkeeper distract the penalty taker (and then go unpunished) by walking out of his goal to query the exact positioning of the ball on the penalty spot? Many times. This is an act of defiant gamesmanship that should always be punished with an instant yellow card for unsporting behavior.

Instead of penalty takers 'getting on' with the task, they resort to distracting the goalkeeper by throwing a few words, by way of beguiling advice: By running up to the ball in strange ways: By delaying their run up, or by stopping half way and restarting: Are these legal moves? Or is it gamesmanship? Only the Referee can decide.

Recent Law changes (have in a strange way) encouraged the growth of gamesmanship. The mandatory Red card punishment for 'tackling from behind', brought in during the USA World Cup in 1994, resulted in players discovering other ways to 'cheat'. In the 'old days', the unpunished tackle from behind was used as a typical method of gamesmanship, whereby defenders unable to cope with a particular attacker's skill and speed, would very often 'clatter' the attacker from behind early in the game - thus giving that attacker a clear message about the outcome of future tackles and 'putting the fear of God' into the attacker for the rest of the game. Thankfully this type of tackle is now properly punished.

The six-second possession rule for goalkeepers' holding the ball has resulted in many forms of semi-parrying the ball during a shot on goal, thus confusing the less wary Referees (did the goalkeeper have it under control or not)? When the 'back-pass' Law appeared in the 1998/1999 season, it resulted in players attempting to circumvent the ruling - for example, by purposefully flicking the ball up onto their heads before heading it back to the goalkeeper. This is against the 'spirit' of the back-pass ruling, and is now punished the same as a normal 'back-pass would be (with the award of an indirect free kick.)

The 1998/1999 Law change, stipulating that the waiting goalkeeper stands outside the penalty area on the goal line where it meets the penalty area, during the taking of kicks from the penalty mark, has lessened the gamesmanship antics used by goalkeepers in former times.

Gamesmanship is not easy to define. In some countries, such acts in sport are seen as a legal bending of the Laws, in other countries, similar acts of devious play, gesturing and comments on and off the fields of play are seen as bad behavior. There are many sly techniques that can be used to counteract superior skill.

Ideally, players' conduct on the field of play should adhere to the 'spirit of the game', but human nature being what it is, ensures that there will always be some form of gamesmanship - the Referees' task is to firstly identify possible gamesmanship, and then decide whether it is 'legal' Gamesmanship or whether it is Cheating?

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**



## ***Outside Influences***



Gamesmanship outside of the game action itself is a powerful tool. In the late 1990's the successful manager of Manchester United (Alex Ferguson) had a number of public spats with opposing English Premier League managers. One typical encounter resulted in the team-manager of a rival successful team Newcastle United (Mr. Kevin Keegan) - normally a well-behaved manager - sparring in public outbursts against Ferguson on television. The result being that everyone became aware of the war-of-words between the rival managers; and all done to create some sort of advantage to enable one team or the other to have an edge over the other team, as the championship race for number one spot in the league was drawing to a close.

This example shows that gamesmanship is rife in all areas of the game. The Referee certainly has his work cut out in trying to distance himself from the influences of such gamesmanship.

On arriving at the ground, the Referee has to accept any offers of hospitality at face value. If the Referee is treated like a 'King' by the Home team when he arrives - is this part-gamesmanship on the Home team's part, or is it just good manners? If the following week a different Home team treats the Referee like a 'pauper' - will this effect the way he treats the Home team players on the field of play? One would hope that players from both teams will be treated the same, regardless of the level of treatment received when arriving at the ground. But human nature being what it is must have some say in this - albeit that it may be subconsciously beyond the control of the Referee. This emphasizes the subtleties that the Referee must be aware of, to enable him to officiate within what can best be described as an "invisible impenetrable shield of outside influences". The good ship 'Star Trek Enterprise' may have been able to provide such a thing, but the 'everyday' Referee has no access to such futuristic technology, and has to rely on his own integrity.

How many times on arrival at grounds, have Referees been welcomed with open arms, only to be snubbed and ridiculed after the game by the very same people because their team has lost - and it is the Referee's fault? The answer to that question is MANY TIMES! And MANY MORE TO COME!

**"The measure of true hospitality can only be measured in the face of adversity."**

In other words - thankfully there still remain one or two teams that will fulfill their offers of hospitality even if "the Referee had a rubbish game!"

Parents! The bane of many Referees! How should the Referee perform when one youth team's parents make a point of shaking his hand and being 'jolly' before the game and the opposing team parents can only offer open abuse? Will this influence decision making by the Referee on the field of play? How can it not effect him? How many Referees can honestly say that they have never made a decision influenced by the abuse being received by parents?

The Referee must distance himself from these types of very strong influences - it would almost be better if he could turn off his hearing, or restrict its limits to the field of play area (and that is abuse enough the Referee to contend with)!

In top-level games, the media hype surrounding important games is utilized to the full by any interested parties. Matches between countries result in gamesmanship headlines being emblazoned across the front pages and the back pages of each respective country's media circus. How about the Cup Final team manger who 'leaks' a story that his top striker is injured, in the hope that the opposing team manager will field a weaker defense, and concentrate on a stronger attack. Then the (so-called) injured player makes a miraculous recovery and is put on the team sheet only hours before the kick-off. All of these are blatant acts of gamesmanship outside the game action itself. But what can the Referee do about these? Can he 'red card' a player because of the antics of the manager before the game has even started. No, of course he cannot. Nevertheless, these are accepted acts of gamesmanship that MUST have some influence on the way the game is perceived and played - but hopefully has no effect in the way the game is officiated by the Referee.

**"The Saint of Referees is the Referee himself".**

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

## ***Gamesmanship within the Game Itself***



The greatest gamesmanship enemy that the Referee confronts in nearly every game - is the gamesmanship of society's influence. Continuing lowering standards have increased the ways in which the Referee can be targeted, abused and influenced. Verbal accosting, and the so called 'factory language' (the acceptance of impolite language) have crept in to everyday society to such an extent, that the Referee must ignore most of the bad things that are said to him during most games. Players have become very adept at trying to "get their opponents' into trouble" by haranguing the Referee and asking for opponents to be cautioned. Referees should consider cautioning such acts as unsporting behavior - but how many times has this happened?

**"The football fraternity is no place for Angels. The game sits more comfortably in Hell!".**

Players will take every possible opportunity to undermine the authority of the Referee during the game. Many instances are seen of players claiming to the Referee that opponents have broken the Law. The Referee is the decider in all cases of Law, and should not be influenced by opinions from lesser knowledgeable bodies! Moaning players should be asked to refrain from such outbursts. In other words, they should be told (not figuratively) "to get back inside their box".

Deliberate handball is another trait that players have become 'canny' at disguising. Players who score goals by deliberately handling the ball have no qualms in refuting any suggestions that they cheated. And are happy for the Referee to allow the goal, when they know perfectly well that they have deceived the Referee. This is the sad mentality that the Referee 'is up against'. Match officials can no longer rely on the integrity of players when match incidents are concerned. On the contrary, as far as cheating and gamesmanship is concerned - Referees now expect players to try and 'get away' with what they can. It has been going on for years in every

sport - and will continue for years more.

Diving is another modern curse. Attackers over-emphasizing and exaggerating tackles made on them by defenders in the defenders' penalty area, in the hope that the Referee will award them a penalty - is another facet to look out for. Conversely, during the award of nearly every penalty, the perpetrator always vents his innocence to the Referee in some degree or another (no matter how blatant the penalty was). Players' exaggerating the effect of physical contact is another wart. Players deliberately running into opponents, in the hope that an indirect free kick for impedence will be awarded to them are yet another obstruction!.

**"The sweet facial expression of innocent children, are nothing compared to the "What me?" facial expressions seen in every game on players' faces when they are punished by the Referee for committing a misdemeanor."**

"Surely not me Ref.? (Finger pointing to their own chest). "I never touched him, honestly". This look of innocence cannot be bettered anywhere else - and is pure subtle gamesmanship used to try and influence the Referee. But we are not quite that daft - are we? I cannot help smiling at such nativity.

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

## ***Gamesmanship after the game has finished***



Gamesmanship does not limit itself to the match itself. Referees should be aware of the following:

- (a) Players (and sometimes Team Officials) have been known to approach the Referee after the match has finished, requesting that any cautions or sending-offs issued in the game against them, are not reported. Players usually adopt an 'over-friendly' attitude that goes something like this: "You're not going to sent those reports in are you Ref.? It's hardly worth it for that." The Referee can consider including details of such requests in his report - or writing a separate report if the level of persistence warrants it. A Referee who does not send in discipline reports is creating a very difficult scenario for the colleague who officiates the same team the following week. Referees MUST send in reports if they have disciplined players during a game. The Football Association will deal strongly with any Referees who do not complete and send in reports properly.
- (b) Referees very often receive a host of unpleasant comments after games. Most of the comments should just be ignored. But do not ignore all the comments at your peril. Any indiscipline that exceeds the bounds of normality should be reported accordingly.
- (c) Although Referees should accept any apologies from players' who have committed offences in the game - they must be accepted in the manner in which they should be offered. Beware the hypocritical player who was a monster on the field of play, but who after the game transforms into a 'groveling toad' by trying to 'suck up' and

lessen the impact of his sending-off in the eyes of the Referee. A sending off is a sending off and nothing less - and the report should not be influenced by duplicitous propositions made after the game has finished.

- (d) Snubbing of Referees in the 'bar' after the game, is a negative form of gamesmanship that can do football clubs no favors at all. Football is just a game. It is a sad state of affairs when players and Referees cannot mix together in the 'bar' for a social drink after the game has finished. A Referee who sticks to his principles will particularly wish to make an appearance in the 'bar' after the game - if only for a quick drink.

**"The worse a game that the Referee thinks he has had - the more effort he should expend in making an appearance in the 'bar' after the game."**

In other words, hold your head up high and accept that you officiated to the best of your ability in that particular game. And be brave enough to stand up to your critics.

- (e) Conversely, a Referee who has had a good game (as far as one team is concerned) may be approached by fawning players and Team Officials whose only aim is to 'get the Referee on their side, especially if the same Referee is officiating against them in a few weeks time.

**"In a game, it only takes a second for a fawn to change into a frenzy!"**

Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)

## ***Dealing with Gamesmanship***



It is no easy task for the Referee to positively identify and deal with gamesmanship. Nevertheless, it must be dealt with in a firm and effective manner - thereby deterring further attempts. The greater the Law knowledge and experience that a Referee has, the easier it will be for him to identify and deal properly with gamesmanship.

OK - let's not 'beat about the bush'. It takes bravery for a Referee not to award a penalty because a player dived in the penalty box. Was it a dive or was it a genuine foul? It takes bravery for a Referee to caution a player for a simulated act or for feigning injury. Is he really in so much pain, or is he feigning?

**Having decided that an incident was an act of gamesmanship, the Referee can:**

1. Apply a simple gesture such as a shake of the head towards the perpetrator.
2. Ignore the fact completely and allow play to continue as normal.
3. Stand upright with hands behind the back thus showing by using body language that play is being allowed to continue.
4. Have a quiet word with the offending player.
5. Stop play and publicly rebuke the player.

## 6. Caution the player for unsporting behavior.

Blatant (obvious) acts of gamesmanship are easy for the Referee to identify and deal with - and need no advice here. It is those acts that border between a real foul and an act of gamesmanship that are the most difficult to distinguish and punish. Being in close proximity, and having a clear view will help of course. The Referee is advised not to ponder about the decision. It is either gamesmanship - or it is not. Referees are only human, and when deciding difficult decisions, Referees will normally give the benefit of the doubt to the perpetrator. In other words, humans are generally expected to behave in a civilized way - so the automatic reactions of the (human) Referee in a dubious situation, is to err on the safe side. For example, a player who may be feigning injury will be more likely to be seen as genuine by the Referee than otherwise.

The Referee should also be aware of those incidents where a player has claimed that he has been elbowed in the face, when in reality nothing of the sort has happened. Many incidents of this nature are now 'picked up' on the numerous cameras surrounding top-level games. It does make you wonder why top players attempt this ultimate act of gamesmanship, when there are so many revealing cameras surrounding the ground as silent witnesses.

The greatest danger is when the Referee is unsure of what decision to make during gamesmanship scenarios. Players will hone in on any weaknesses displayed by the Referee. The Referee must not falter when deciding gamesmanship issues. **You either give it or you don't. Do not waiver in the middle.** Make your decision quickly and stick to it, and deal with the incident as you see fit. Once you have made your decision, do not dwell for a moment on whether it was the right decision or not, and do not be influenced by the reaction of others. When deciding gamesmanship issues, one side or the other will invariably accost the Referee.

Gamesmanship acts (or supposed gamesmanship acts) and how they are dealt with by the Referee, can only ever favor one team. The other team will naturally feel aggrieved. So the Referee is on a 'loser' whichever way he goes. With this in mind, I will repeat that a positive decision needs to be made. (Note - a positive decision can include letting play continue to the advantage of opposing team.) You either penalize the perpetrator for gamesmanship, or you decide that no gamesmanship had occurred.

Be prepared for an onslaught from one team or the other - and deal with any further misconduct, as you would do in the normal course of the game. For example, you can caution any dissenting players. The greatest cure for not penalizing a 'supposed' incident of gamesmanship, is to keep the play going - or restart the game as soon as you can. Players will soon stop their moaning if play continues.

**"You either give it or you don't. Do not waiver in the middle.**

Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)



## ***Diffusing Dissent***



The aim of this page is to make Referees think about ways they can diffuse dissent on the field of play.

It is important to note that the advice given here, is not necessarily the 'official line', but nevertheless, is used by many Referees when controlling players. Key phrases ('one-liners') and tips that Referees can use and find work for them in different situations that can occur during a game when trying to diffuse dissent. The trick here is to keep your 'one-liners' short, and vary them when you can. Dissent is a difficult thing to control, and the advice given here should help you think about ways that you can use. Don't try and remember, or use all of these tips in one go. Use one or two new ones each game, vary them slightly to suit your personality, and you will soon find that you have made up your own 'one-liners' to suit each incident. The main aim of the 'one-liners' is to diffuse the situation, to allow you to give the perpetrator a 'rollicking' rather than caution them. Albeit that you will sometimes need to show them a 'yellow card'.

'One-liner's will depend on the character of the Referee. You will need to develop those methods that personally suit your personality. In other words, you will need to be able to 'carry-off' these methods without looking as though they are choreographed. For example, a very simple on-liner that I often use is "Shut up!"

That's it – BUT there is a method in applying this simple phrase. When play is stopped, and you want to impart this strong message to a dissenting player, move away to an empty part of the field of play at least 15 yards away or more from the player you want to talk to. As you are walking to this position, say out loudly "Come here number 5" (or whatever number he is!). Moving to this position will allow the player to vent off some of his steam by the time he gets to

you. Keep your eyes downwards, and when he gets near to you, simply lift your head, make eye contact and simply and quietly say to him "Shut up!" and then immediately walk away to your new position in readiness to restart play. This gives a clear message to the player, and to all those watching. It also allows the Referee to cool down himself and impart a strong message of quiet confidence and control. This method is more suitable to those Referees who have a strong bearing and a more dominant character. It would not be any good (for instance) for a new Referee, or youth Referee to try this method. These tips are not exhaustive, and are here to give Referees some food for thought. Referees are encouraged to use their own methods and 'one-liners'. The Referee must always be polite and NEVER swear or berate players.

**One-liners and tips you can use (with a smile) without having to stop play to talk to the perpetrator.**

1. "Not that old 'chestnut' again, can't you think of anything more original"? (This is a good 'one-liner' to reply to the players' old favorite comment such as "You must be joking Ref.!")
2. A 'stare' is a very good tool when the player is some distance away from you. This lets him know that you have heard what he said, and that you are aware of him! Do this when the ball is out of play, so that you don't lose concentration on the game. It works a treat, and you can do it even if the player is at the other end of the field of play.

If the player is not looking at you (this is because he knows you have spotted him, and he is trying to avoid eye contact with you) - his eyes will eventually meet yours – and no words are needed. Stare at him for about 5 seconds. A slight shake of your head from side to side will also strengthen your message to him.

3. In addition to this, when you have engaged the players' eyes, another tip is to use body language. Use your hand and mime the 'zip your mouth' movement. I.e. pretend that you are zipping your mouth closed. This is a very good way impart your views (without words) over long (or even short) distances on the field of play.

4. "If I wanted to have an afternoon of nagging, I would have stayed at home".

5. "Stop moaning and get on with it."

6. A wry smile as you run by, is also most disconcerting to a player. This tells him that you have heard him, but think his comments are childish.

7. Use one hand to 'brush away the fly'. In other words, use your arm and hand to wave away the dissent.

8. A simple shake of the head whilst looking at the player is another simple method of putting the player 'in his place'.

**One-liners and tips you can use (with a smile) when play has stopped and you wish to talk to the perpetrator.**

As mentioned above, the trick is for Referees to accept that football is a very emotive game, and passions will always run high. When dealing with diffusing dissent when play is stopped, and when you want to impart a warning message to a dissenting player, you must give that player a moment or two to 'cool down'. You can do this by moving away to an empty part of the field of play at least 15 yards away or more from the player you want to talk to. As you are

walking to this position, say out loudly "Come here number 5" (or whatever number he is!).

Moving to this position will allow the player to vent off some of his steam by the time he gets to you. As the player approaches, if you anticipate that he is approaching you in a manner that suggests that he will take some stopping as he approaches you. Tell him to "calm down", "slow down", "keep a distance away" or any other verbal warning that you can think of to that effect. Do not put the whistle to your mouth (unless you want to lose more teeth than is necessary under the circumstances). At the same time, use your 'body language' by holding out both of your hands palms forward (like shooing cows back) and gesture at the player to slow down. Do not stand still at first when you are doing this, else you are likely to get stampeded.

Use a bit of Law 18 Common sense, and gain a few extra moments by moving backwards a few more steps whilst making the warning actions just mentioned. Do not take too many steps backwards, because there comes a moment when you have to make a stand and show the approaching player that you are in charge and will not be intimidated. When you reach this moment - 'stick to your guns' - stand firm and erect, and then say your 'one-liner'.

1. "I didn't call you over here for you to give ME a lecture".
2. "If you continue to disagree with my decisions, I have no choice but to take action against you". It is important to note – do not say " The next time that I have to speak to you, it will be to caution you". This will put the Referee in a difficult position, and will leave him with no leeway but to implement the caution the next time he speaks to this player. Referees should never 'set out their stall', by threatening cautions next time around!
3. One exception to the above, that I personally I use, when I "really do mean that I will caution this player" the next time he misbehaves: - "The next time you so much as fart in the rest of the game, you will be going in my book". Once again, this line should only be used by those Referee characters that can impart this strong, final and somewhat humorous message.
4. "I'm giving you a few moments to calm down. Count to 10. OK?, Then let's get on with it". Say the above line to the player as he approaches you. This is a useful line to diffuse an irate player. And one which I use in every game. Put both your arms down in front of you at about 45 degrees, with fingers pointing upwards palms facing the oncoming player. This body action tells the player to calm down, and can be clearly seen by anyone out of earshot.
5. "Are you OK? Calm down a bit. You should see your face!" This is a useful line to diffuse a player whose eyes are 'bulging out on stalks'. It usually ends in a smile from the player. I.e. you have broken the spell of dissent. You can then ask him to behave himself.

### **How you deal with dissent around you rather than coming from one particular individual.**

1. When you have given a free kick, move away swiftly to a new position. Staying near the area of the free kick will invite dissenting comments. Players will never (or very rarely) run after you, if you're quick enough. There will of course be occasions when you will need to remain near the area of a free kick (ceremonial free kicks, and when a player has been injured, or when you anticipate confrontation between opposing players.
2. When players (as a whole) are giving the Referee open 'corporate' dissent, the Referee can:

(a) Shout out loud enough for everyone to hear: "Get on with the football lads!"

(b) Stop the game (or when play has naturally stopped) call the both captains together, and say:

**"If your players continue with open dissent, I have no option but to apply the letter of the Law"**

(c) When open dissent is increasing, one tip is to stop play for every foul, no matter how small. Do not allow ANY advantage until the players have calmed down. Keep blowing your whistle until they get the message. Peep, peep, and peep for every infringement. If you allow advantage to flow during a tetchy game, it will undoubtedly cause you much more trouble. Advantage is applied when a player has been fouled, and play is allowed to continue because the fouled player (or his team) gain more of an advantage by continuing play, rather than restarting play with a free kick. When players are angry, or are openly showing dissent, there is a great danger of further fouls and retribution occurring if a Referee allows advantage to flow during these periods. Once the players have settled down, the Referee can consider applying advantage once again in the game.

**3. Awarding Offside** can invariably open up a tirade of comments from players. A useful tip for Referees (when the Referee is near the scene of the offside) is to blow the whistle long and very loud. At the same time, move away from the scene of the offside. This action has two effects. Firstly, the Referee cannot hear the dissent, and secondly, neither can anyone else! This tip can also be used when awarding free kicks.

Dealing and punishing dissent is another subject. The advice given on this page is aimed to make Referees think about the different ways of diffusing dissent. It is not meant to be an alternative way to properly punish dissent. All Referees are individuals – and as such, will need to develop their own ways in controlling players. These ideas may hint at what can be done to ease the pressure for a Referee in a game.

**The examples below must be used with caution. Although they may 'break the ice' in certain situations, they may backfire on you – so don't say I didn't warn you!**

- Player: "There's two teams out here today Ref." Referee: "Really? I was wondering when your team were going to make a start."
- A Referee who is receiving some verbal grief from a player:  
Referee to player: "One of us might be going to the changing rooms early. Guess which one?"
- A Referee who is receiving some verbal grief from a player:  
Referee to player: "It's a great pity that there are no windows in the changing rooms. I'd hate for you to miss the rest of the game"
- A Referee who is receiving some verbal grief from a player:  
Referee calls the player towards him, slowly puts his hand in his card pocket whilst staring at the approaching player. Pulls out his handkerchief and proceeds to blow his nose!! **DOUBLE WARNING ON THIS ONE** – only use if you can definitely get away with it! And remember to put a handkerchief in your pocket! You might need it to wipe away the tears!
- Referee's answer to a player who keeps questioning the Referee's decisions:  
"If I made as many mistakes as you have done in this game, I would seriously think about taking up Refereeing."

- Referee's answer (with a wide smile) to a player who keeps questioning the Referee's decisions: "If you carry on like that, then you and I are going to fall out - and I hate to fall out with anyone."
- Player: "You must be joking Ref.!"  
Referee. (With a wide show of teeth), "Funny you should say that."
- Player: "You must be joking Ref.!"  
Referee. "Yeah, but I was hoping for a quality audience today."
- Player "You're having a laugh Ref.!"  
Referee: "I haven't had such a good laugh since I got married."  
• Player: "Your having a laugh Ref."  
Referee: "I know. That's cause this game's such a joke!"
- Referee to troublesome player: "Do you know that there are only two players in this game who are giving me trouble...and YOU are BOTH of them."
- Player worried about the opposing team wasting time: "Are you adding this on, Ref.?" Referee's reply: " Shall I add it on now or at the end of the game?"
- Player's shout of frustration: "F\*\*\* me Ref.... "  
As Referee runs past the player, he quietly says: "Sorry, but you're not my type mate!"
- Player's shout of frustration: "F\*\*\*in' Hell Ref.... "  
Referee: "I hope so - for your sake!"
- Player: "What's that for Ref.?"  
Referee's reply with a shrug of the shoulders: "I don't know".  
(You'll get one or two strange looks but it works!)
- Player: "What's that for Ref.?"  
Referee's reply with a wide 'knowing' smirk: "Law 12 'Fouls and Misconduct' paragraph 3, Direct Free Kick Offences!"
- Player who thinks he is a super-star: "Do you know who I am?"  
Referee's reply: "No, but if you sign my notebook, I'll be most grateful."
- Player who thinks that the Referee should know his name without asking for it: "You already know my name Ref." Referee's reply: "I know - but my spelling is awful. Would you mind spelling it out for me?"
- Player: Blimey Ref. Where did they get you from?"  
Referee: I only said I was available... I never said that I was any good. "
- Player with the motion of his hands, wants the Referee to card an opponent, and says, "Where's your cards Ref." Referee's reply "Which color would **YOU** like?"
- Player" "Are you blind Ref.?"  
Referee's reply: "Yep – so you'll have to write your own name in my notebook, if you keep going on!"
- Player "Are you blind Ref.?"

Referee: "Who said that?"

- Referee to player: "Do you know what a football looks like?"  
Player, "Yes!" Referee, "Good. In that case would you mind kicking the football, and not your opponents!"
- Player: "Ref. You're spoiling this game!"  
Referee: "I've spoilt much better games than this mate."
- Player: "Keep up with play Ref."  
Referee: "I am, It's those modern balls that I can't keep up with!"
- Player who refuses to give the Referee his name: Referee to player: "You'll have to help me here, 'cause they don't supply us Ref.'s with invisible ink anymore."

**Question:** What is the best way of dealing with a player who is being disciplined, who immediately bends over when he gets to you, and starts to untie and retie his boot laces (or turns his head away and repeatedly spits at the ground as he is listening to you).

**Answer:** Firstly, give the player a few seconds to release his frustration, before telling him that you are waiting for him to stand up (or to stop spitting) before you have a word to him. Something along the lines of:

"Would you please stand up whilst I talk to you." or "Would you mind not spitting whilst I talk to you."

Wait for the player to stand up before you speak to him, and be firm in insisting that he does not turn away from you until you have either finished speaking to him, or have shown the yellow card.

If he persists in his action, politely inform him that if he continues, he will receive an additional caution for showing dissent by action. (See Law 12 – "a player may be shown the yellow card if he shows dissent by word or action.")

When a player spits sideways, ask him if the spit was meant for you? This may bring the player quickly to his senses. "Excuse me player, but I hope that your spit was not meant for me."

Verbal warnings to players, are one way of effectively managing situations, without resorting to cards.

To minimize confrontation, try and gauge how willing the player is to listen to your advice. Start off in a friendly manner, but if you need to get their attention, state it in no uncertain terms. In short, be prepared to give the player a chance to behave; if he doesn't, then you will need to take an immediate and stronger approach. Do not loudly berate the player - or shout out your words. It is important that you remain calm and deliver your warning in a clam, quiet and confident way.

Sometimes, a few quick simple words to the player will suffice. For example:

**"Can you please be careful."**

**"This is the second time that you have made a late tackle; I will have to take further**

**action next time."**

**"Just calm down a bit please, before you do something silly."**

**"This is unacceptable behavior and I am giving you fair warning that this must stop.**

**I'm giving you a moment or two, to cool down."**

You need to reassure players, that you are looking out for everyone's interests, and that you are not just there to lay down the Laws.

It is very important that you make eye contact with the player whilst you are talking to him. Let your voice inflection denote the seriousness of the message that you wish to convey. Whilst you are conversing with the player, do it in a professional manner, by showing respect – this is even more important when tempers are being lost. Whatever you do, do not belittle or talk down to players, as this will inflame the situation instead of calming it down (which is what you should be trying to achieve.)

There will be occasions when your control is challenged outright – in these situations you must tell the player that he leaves you with no other options but to take action against him in accordance with the Laws. For example, you could say: "I'm sorry, but your behavior is blatantly against the Laws, and therefore I have no choice but to take the appropriate action against you."

**Courtesy Julian Carosi at [www.corshamref.net](http://www.corshamref.net)**

## ***Practical Tips***



**Carry your whistle using a wrist lanyard rather than in your mouth.**

**Reason:** Less chance of damage to your teeth or blowing the whistle too fast.

**Use Velcro to attach your badge to your uniform. The soft side of the Velcro is sewn onto the shirt and the harder side is sewn on the badge.**

**Reason:** When washing the shirt, the badge will not get destroyed. The badge can also be moved easily to a second shirt.

**Talk to each coach before the game to confirm playing rules such as how many substitutions will be allowed and when, the length of each half of play and whether extra time will be played in the case of a tie game.**

**Reason:** Prevent disagreements later in the game.

**Always check the field before the game, especially the goal area for dangerous objects such as broken glass.**

**Reason:** Most games are played in open parks where people may not use the garbage containers provided. Inspect the field, goal posts and nets a minimum of 30 minutes before the



game. That will ensure any problems can be corrected so the start of play is not delayed.

**Carry a ball pressure gauge in your referee bag.**

**Reason:** As you test the pressure in various balls offered for use in games, you will see many balls are not in good shape (panels ripped) and may have faulty valves which will lead to a loss of air during the game.

**Before the game, ensure the parents and spectators setting up their lawn chairs, do so well back of the sidelines. It is easier to properly set up the first set of people who arrive than when everyone has set up their chairs. In order to do this, a referee must arrive a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff.**

**Reason:** Safety of the players, substitutes and coaching staff are important. Players need a minimum of six feet beyond the touchlines without any obstacles. If you establish where the chairs may be set up, the parents/spectators will enforce this stipulation for you so that any newcomers do not block their view of the game.

**Courtesy The Ontario Soccer Association @ [www.soccer.on.ca](http://www.soccer.on.ca)**