



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



(Hints Tips and Suggestions for Successful Game, Player and Self-Management)



This collection of ideas has been put together from a number of sports officials web sites and documents covering a variety of sports from around the world.

The wording has been changed in some places to make it more “cricket friendly” but the messages remain the same as they apply across all sports officiating.

The structure of each article follows a sort of numbered list and we considered calling this resource “Officiating by Numbers” but felt that sounded very prescriptive and, as you will know or find out during your officiating career, not every incident or scenario fits neatly into any one box or category.

You will find that some of the articles partially repeat each other, some support others, some may even slightly contradict others. The aim is to provide you with a range of ideas and options that you can adapt to your own style of officiating and hopefully help you on your way to achieving your goals on the officiating pathway.

Compiled by

Ian Royle

Regional Education Officer

ECB ACO South Central Region

Edited by

John Golding

Regional Development Officer

ECB ACO South Central Region

All content is copyright of their original owners.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Index

Topic	Page
Part 1. Some Basic Ideas	3
50 Things Every New Umpire Should Know	4
15 Unwritten Rules of Officiating	7
13 Immovable Laws of Officiating	14
6 Points of Simple Wisdom	16
Part 2. Conflict and Communication	17
3 Steps for Conflict Resolution	18
4 Tips for Talking to Players	20
5 Maxims for Managing Conflict	23
6 Things you should NEVER say to a Player	25
7 Steps to Better Conversations	28
Part 3. The Mental Side of Officiating	30
26 Mental Performance Fundamentals	31
7 Aspects of Emotional Control	36
6 Tips and Tools to Help You Look at Yourself	40
6 Ways to Bounce Back from a Bad Game	43
8 Steps to Stop Self-Criticism Detracting from Your Successes	45
3 Lessons to Exercise Control over Your Emotions -The Chimp Paradox	50
Part 4. Self-improvement	52
15 Ways to Improve Your Game	53
8 Ways to Avoid Negative Attention	56
6 C's That Will Get You Straight A's	60
5 Potential Regrets from Your Officiating Career	63
5 Effective Communication Methods to Improve Perception of Your Skills	69
Part 5. Mentoring	74
5 Quick Mentoring Tips	75
9 Characteristics of a Good Mentor	76



South Central Region ECB ACO Inside the Mind of the Official



Part 1. Some Basic Ideas





South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifty Things Every New Umpire Should Know!

1. You learn how to better express yourself, so others understand exactly what you mean.
2. You are going to get moaned at, by players, coaches, spectators, to your face and behind your back.
3. You will need to spend some money on decent kit.
4. You are going to make lifelong friends.
5. During the off-season use the time to revise, refresh and attend courses – and enjoy it.
6. You become a better planner because you must prepare for traffic and weather etc.
7. By doing games you will learn, improve your skills and enjoy of being part of the contest.
8. Good shoes are important for foot, knee and back health.
9. Though you may not like politics or networking, they come into play regardless.
10. The semi-finals are often more intense than the finals.
11. You'll learn to ignore (or handle) obnoxious spectators.
12. Understand that officiating is about the journey. Every game counts.
13. Breathe. It will get stressful but staying calm will lead to better resolutions.
14. You learn how to defuse anger in others.
15. Improve how you dress and respect for you grows.
16. Long after you retire, you will wish you were still officiating.
17. There will be colleagues you like; colleagues you hope you never work with again and colleagues you want beside you when all hell breaks loose.
18. You learn to admit you are wrong and move on quickly.
19. Displaying confidence in your tone of voice and body posture goes a long way to preserving and promoting your credibility.
20. You are going to get decisions wrong — probably lots of them. All umpires did and still do at times. The best learn from those moments.
21. You will realize you don't always get the big games – That is OK



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifty Things Every New Umpire Should Know!

22. Officiating teaches you to become a better leader.
23. Mastering the definitions in the Law book is critical to understanding the game.
24. You improve your listening skills or perish.
25. Get a mentor, and later in your career, be a mentor.
26. You learn how to enforce Laws judiciously and not always “by the book”.
27. You figure out how to build a strong teamwork.
28. People look at you with respect when you walk out of the changing room if you carry yourself with the proper demeanour and attitude.
29. You become a continuous learner out of necessity.
30. You understand the importance of being a great colleague.
31. You will be evaluated. Those evaluations will help you develop. Most of the time. But not always.
32. Some clubs work really hard to take care of you and some simply see you as a necessary nuisance.
33. Putting bad things in the past will become the norm. Look through the windscreen, not the rear-view mirror.
34. The action is not always where the ball is.
35. You will sometimes have to pester people to get paid.
36. Appointers do play favourites. How to become one of those favourites is by having good availability, showing up on time, being dependable and developing a good reputation.
37. You will find that proper hydration and nutrition matter.
38. Fitness is critical — you need to be as physically capable after tea as you were for the opening over.
39. Not every veteran is willing to help you.
40. Wear the proper kit for your level.
41. You need to have uniforms and undergarments for all sorts of weather, and there are times you will have to pack all of them because conditions will change between the time you leave home and the time the game begins.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifty Things Every New Umpire Should Know!

42. You will actually learn the Laws, rather than just thinking you know them.
43. You start to watch games on TV from an officiating perspective instead of just a fan's perspective.
44. There is no substitution for repetitions. Get out there and work every chance you get.
45. See what you call; call what you see.
46. Do not let an injury linger without treatment; get it checked out early before it gets worse and ends your season.
47. Advancement may come slower than you expect — but better a year too late than a year too soon.
48. You are more likely get caught out through not knowing the match regulations than by not knowing the Laws.
49. You will sit in the stands and mumble “you are wrong” every time you hear another person in the stands yell at the officials because said fan does not know the Laws.
50. You will feel great when you get that big decision right.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Unwritten Rules of Officiating

Every official knows the importance of the rules of the game. Regardless of the sport, there are some unwritten rules you should follow as well.

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

One of the basics of umpiring – it is either Out or Not – no “benefit of the doubt”, if you are not sure it is out then it is NOT.

Same with No balls – you are either sure it is a fair delivery, or it is a No Ball (Unless you are ICC with TV back up of course!)

Gut feeling is a valuable officiating tool. Many times, your instincts will guide you in the right direction. But your eyes trump all. See what you call and call only what you see.

2. The CAPTAIN is not always the Team Leader.

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

Just because a player attends the toss before the game does not mean that he or she will be the player with the best sportsmanship.

When that is the case, make every effort to quietly demote that captain and talk to other players who you can see are on board with your problems and get them to talk to the captain or problem players.

3. Keep the game MOVING.

There are few officials who want to be on the field for longer than necessary.

However, there are some games that are just going to be longer than others. Two evenly matched teams may take every one of the 100 overs to reach a result.

What is not acceptable is for officials to be the cause of a game going long. Do everything possible to start on time, at the beginning of the game or after any interval and to get play running as soon as possible after a wicket or change of bowler.

That does not mean neglecting important duties or rushing teams. It does mean being efficient with recording, moving to your position and getting the next over started or the next ball bowled.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Unwritten Rules of Officiating

4. Be **COURTEOUS** to players when it is needed.

While an official should strive to keep the game moving, there are times when you need to slow it down or stop it. For example, when dealing with an injured player

So, when you see him or her get hit and in pain, take some extra time — check if they need a drink/physio.

Buy that player a few minutes, he or she will probably appreciate it and take it into account for over rates as regulations allow.

The same thing can sometimes apply when tensions get high. Take a moment to delay play and use that time to give a friendly reminder as opposed to going straight for the sanctions. When you feel the situation has had a moment to calm down, get the game moving again.

5. Give a **LONGER LEASH** to those in charge.

This may seem to contradict 2. above about captains but maybe more important is the flip side of this rule: Those who are not in charge do not get a long leash.

Yes, you should listen to captains who give their thoughts to you about a call or situation — as long as they don't cross the line. Communication, including listening to perceived grievances, is part of game management.

But other players and those on the sidelines should not be given the same patience or privilege. Unsportsmanlike talk and actions by those individuals need to be addressed right away. If warranted, you can give captains a chance to take care of other players. But if they do not take care of business, you need to step up and penalize appropriately.

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



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Unwritten Rules of Officiating

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

Not benefit over decisions but on behaviours.

There will be times — probably in every game — when you get questioned on a decision you made or a call you made. How you respond to that question should be determined in part by how you are asked.

Think about the ranting, raving captain, or coach. Anything that does not go exactly how he or she wants and the blame is pointed toward you or your colleague. You are to blame for his or her team's woes. Now think about the captain/coach who worries about his or her team throughout the game but does not get upset at you when decisions go against them. Instead, that coach focuses on "coaching" his or her players.

In a tight moment, either captain may question a call. The captain who does not go ballistic on every call deserves a more thorough response than the gobby one. It is as simple as that.

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

7. Look **CAPTAINS** in the eye.

Police will tell you that suspects who lower or turn their heads when providing alibis are withholding information. It is difficult to obfuscate when you are looking someone right in the eye.

Whether you are introducing yourself to the captain before the game or answering his or her question during play, communication should be done face to face and straight on. Even if you are delivering bad news, you will have more credibility and gain more respect by looking the captain in the eye.

Understand that advice applies only when the ball is dead, such as other intermissions. If you need to communicate with the captain during play, keep your eyes on the action and wait for action to cease.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Unwritten Rules of Officiating

8. WHEN IN DOUBT, do what the game expects.

An official takes on the task of applying mainly descriptive Laws to fluid situations, but there are times in games when that official may not be immediately certain what action to take after observing a play or an incident. Law books will spell out the intent and guiding principles of the law and the better officials figure out how to apply them equitably, in context. But there are times when an official faces doubt at the moment he or she is expected to make a call or no-call. When that happens, it is best to do what is expected.

Does it appear that a player sustained a possible concussion even though he or she does not have a loss of consciousness after a play? If there is any doubt, it is best to take that player out of the game to get checked. Should an umpire call a borderline high full pitch as a No Ball? If you do call it then is it expected that the umpire should follow through by issuing a warning if it was considered dangerous? An umpire may have doubt when two players collide and go flying to the floor. Deliberate or accidental? Rule one or the other and apply any sanctions as appropriate.

In any event, do not try to run away from the play or shrug your shoulders. You will lose credibility fast.

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

9. Answer QUESTIONS, not statements.

“That is a bad call.” “That wasn’t a shot.” “He obstructed him.”

What do all those comments have in common? Ding, ding. You are correct if you answered, “They are statements that players say/yell/shout, etc.”

Players say a lot to officials during a game. And much of what they have to say, whether it is a valid point or not, does not need a response. Statements do not need an answer from officials. Often the only time you need to respond to a statement is when you are delivering a warning or a penalty for one that crosses the line.

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



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Unwritten Rules of Officiating

10. Do not answer the question you do not have INFORMATION about.

You do not need to answer every question, though. That most often relates to a captain/player asking a question about a play called by a colleague. If you do not know what happened, do not guess. If you do not have information, tell the captain/player you will find out for him or her at a break in play or suggest they talk to your colleague. Whatever you do, make sure you are supportive of your partner.

Sometimes a captain or player may ask you about a rule or situation that you are not sure about. If you do not have the knowledge or information you need, do not guess at the answer. You will lose all credibility if you answer the question wrong. Instead, seek assistance from your colleague or find out the answer after the game and get back to them. Then vow to study the Law/Regulations more, so that you can answer that question that might come up in the future.

11. Get the game going after a MISTAKE or SANCTION.

Sure, sanctions (penalty runs etc.) and mistakes are a big deal. But it is the responsibility of officials to make sure they do not become a huge deal and negatively impact a game.

When your game has a situation, such as penalty runs or something requiring a report, the best thing you can do is to get the next ball bowled as soon as appropriate. Once game action resumes, players, coaches and spectators will typically worry about that action and forget about the situation that caused the problem in the first place.

While participants will be forced to move on when action resumes, officials should keep the incident in the back of their mind. Do not dwell on what happened but keep in mind that it could lead to future issues. Managing the game by making sure your presence is felt even more after such issues, for example, is a good way to prevent future problems.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Unwritten Rules of Officiating

12. Be 100 percent sure if making the UNEXPECTED or UNUSUAL CALL.

Several years ago, a baseball state championship turned on a base umpire's call. With two out, a player whose double seemingly drove in the winning run was called out for missing first base. The run was nullified, the inning ended, and that team wound up losing the title.

The coach argued, but within the bounds of sportsmanship, asking the umpire if he was certain. "I am positive," the umpire said. "I would never make that call unless I was absolutely sure."

Afterwards, the coach acknowledged the umpire. "He's a good umpire," the coach said. "If he was that sure, he must have seen it."

It is never a good idea to enforce an arcane Law just to let everyone know that you know the book. But if it needs to be called, sell it, and be prepared to back it up with confidence. The more unusual the situation, the more sure you must be.

13. Do not insert yourself or disrupt the GAME if it is not necessary.

Back off. If you are an official — no matter the sport — and you somehow do not feel "in the game" because little if anything to rule on has occurred, back off. Do not be that official with a quick whistle or flag, looking for something, any kind of violation or penalty, to make it look like you are "in the game." Back off. It is better for you, your colleague and the game.

Many officials think they are not doing their job if they do not enforce the rules, especially if they have not been heard from early in a game or an extended period of time during the game. It will be an uncomfortable situation for many, but the better officials know when to stay out of the way and call only what needs to be called. Under no circumstances should an official ignore things that involve the safety of the players, (e.g., beamers) but being too quick to insert yourself when you do not need to will result in too many interventions for minor incidents that are better handled with preventive officiating.

Making a call or ruling can be very straightforward and easy. But withholding an intervention in a situation that is close to "the line" but does not warrant you to stop the game takes discipline and confidence. You can always have that "quiet word" at an opportune moment. At some point, the game will need you and when it does, be ready, in the meantime, back off.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Unwritten Rules of Officiating

14. Let the PLAYERS help you make the call.

Generally, players are not award-winning actors. And as you go down from the professional level to league levels, the acting skills are dramatically worse.

Appeals for catches and LBWs - players will try to convince you one way or the other that they hit it/did not hit it. Body language and instant reactions can help inform a decision but cannot be the be all and end all.

Read the reaction of the players and use that to provide you with the additional information to make a correct call.

15. When a game is obviously over, CONCENTRATION needs to be stronger.

In most any sport, there are games that are decided early on, sometimes in the first half or early innings. It is about that time when teams will start going through the motions if they have not already, and that makes it easy for officials to do the same.

Thoughts of home, work, meetings, or your next game can easily grab your attention instead of the game in front of you. That is the time to increase your focus as much as possible. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by anything. Focus on the game and use it as an opportunity to improve.

A blowout situation offers officials the perfect time to work on certain mechanics or habits or to experiment.

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



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Thirteen Immovable Laws of Officiating

1. The Law of Memory

The older you get, the better you were. Ever notice that with each telling of tales we become better and better officials? Memory is such a wonderful evaluation enhancer.

2. The Law of Respect

There are those who deserve to receive the benefit of the doubt from you. That is a “gift” to be earned not dispensed gratuitously.

3. The Law of Response

When asked a question, if you choose to answer, do so tightly. Do not answer a question for which you do not have credible information. Answer questions, not statements.

4. The Law of Deference

Speak with courtesy. Your point will carry double its weight. If you are shouting you will not be clearly heard.

5. The Law of Threats

Showdowns lead to bust-ups. In either case, you will come out on the short end. When you threaten someone, you weaken your position.

6. The Law of Belief

“Call it the way you saw it.” Today that may be found wanting by TV replays, but the justification of a call is based on what you believe you saw.

7. The Law of Candour

Mistakes are made. The acceptance of that and the corollary of admittance is new territory for many.

8. The Law of Eavesdropping

Steer clear of social media. When you put words into the digital realm, you own them.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Thirteen Immovable Laws of Officiating

9. The Law of Impartiality

If you have to think about whether something might be a conflict of interest, consider it so.

10. The Law of the Ladder

Seldom will you get the toughest, top games because you scored 100 percent in the classroom. You will get them because the appointments officer believes you will do the job on the field.

11. The Law of Adaptation

If your approach to the game seems to result in less than satisfactory marks/reports, your methods have to change. You have to change before your results will change. You might believe that “others” have to do the changing. They will not.

12. The Law of Ownership

You will be presumed arrogant. That is because you own the white coat. A powerful garment that coat. Your words and deeds must always define a less arrogant you.

13. The Law of Wholeness

Every appointment is more than the game. It is a mosaic of responsibilities. With each piece of that mosaic comes the opportunity to enhance your stature as an official or exasperate those who are trying to rely on you. From acceptance/ confirmation through game-report filing, from arriving at the ground to leaving, your professional, thoughtful best is required.

Barry Mano, Founder and Publisher of “Referee”



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Points of Simple Wisdom

1. You will make mistakes.

Sometimes they are dreadful mistakes, but we must accept them as an environmental hazard in a job that calls for us to make a multitude of split-second decisions under what can be stressful conditions. To expect perfection is too heavy a burden for any person to carry and ultimately will take the joy out of officiating for even the best official.

“Strive for excellence, not perfection” – Michael Gough

2. Know your role.

You are part of a team. Do not showboat. When you need to sell a call, it is OK to give an emphatic signal. But actions designed to draw attention away from the players and onto officials are unprofessional and unacceptable. Use the standard mechanics and signals for the level of the game you are working on.

3. You do not care who wins.

One of the many sports myths accepted as fact is that the officials are predisposed to favour the home team. But an official should never use calls to favour either team for any reason. Impartiality is the foundation on which the officiating house is built. Officials must be blind to factors that have nothing to do with the game, including who wins or loses.

4. For all but a few of us, officiating is a hobby, not our profession.

Recognizing that will help keep your life in better balance. It takes time, hard work and study to become a successful official. But an official must not put officiating ahead of what is really important: family and work. Devote more time and energy to your family and your job than you do to officiating.

5. Officiating builds skills for a lifetime.

The qualities that make a great official are also the qualities that make a person a good employee, spouse, parent, and friend. Teamwork, loyalty, sacrifice, study, decision-making, fair-mindedness, accountability, and honesty are just a few of the positive skills and qualities that can be learned, developed, and implemented through officiating.

6. You umpire as you are.

Your officiating personality is driven by your everyday personality. That is not necessarily a bad thing. But remember that extremes are often detrimental in officiating. For example, if your job involves supervising people, remember that you cannot treat fellow officials, players and coaches the same as you do your employees. If you are in sales, you may have to tone down your personality on the field!



South Central Region ECB ACO Inside the Mind of the Official



Part 2. Conflict and Communication





South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Three Steps for Conflict Resolution

The feather behind, the bat/pad, every LBW - they can be tough calls that can generate conflict, controversy and a player who may get very upset.

All officials have experienced conflict with a player. Confrontations can have positive outcomes if the official follows the basic principles of conflict resolution management.

Being in the proper position to make the call and knowing the applicable Law are prerequisites to successfully selling the tough call. What if the player does not notice or care? Fight or flight is what your body may be telling you may seem like good options, but that is the adrenaline speaking - neither works. A better alternative is to apply conflict resolution management.

By practicing three easy steps, the outcomes of those confrontations can be quickly and successfully resolved.

Step One – Listen.

Listen to the nature of the complaint. Let the player disclose his or her feelings or vent frustration with your call. Do not interrupt while the player is voicing an opinion about your call.

Nonverbal communication skills, including body language, can dramatically help sell the call. Make eye contact with the player while he or she is talking. Keep your arms behind your back or at your sides, never crossed in front of your chest since that suggests you are guarded. Do not roll your eyes. Nodding, with one hand up to your chin, shows you value and acknowledge the player's opinion with a willingness to listen to his or her point of view.

Step Two – Acknowledge/Empathize.

Acknowledge that you understand and empathize with his or her position. Let the player know you understand the nature of the complaint while responding to concerns. Answer questions and identify or analyse unclear issues. Speak in a tone that is conversational. Enunciate and articulate so the player will understand that you are in control of the situation.

Hand gestures may be used, but never point your finger at or physically touch the player. Use some of the player's own words when responding to show that you have been listening.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Three Steps for Conflict Resolution

Step Three – Accept your opinions differ/Discussion over.

Resolve the conflict by initiating a course of action that is both timely and fair. Chances are you are not going to get agreement, but you cannot allow the player's complaint to impede the progress of the game or undermine your control of the situation.

You may thank the player for voicing a concern, then emphasize that it is time to get back to playing the game. Use a positive, upbeat tone of voice with proper voice inflection and voice quality. Your voice energy should demonstrate enthusiasm, your rate of speech should be fast enough so the player knows you are ready to move on, and your pitch should be direct, smooth, and pleasant. As long as there are contests between competitive teams, played by competitive people and officiated by human beings, there will be opportunities for conflict.

By following the three-step approach, your tough calls will still be tough, but you will have the tools to successfully overcome your next player's challenge. Selling the tough call becomes almost as important as making the tough call. Using both verbal and nonverbal skills will dramatically improve your success rate.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Four Tips for Talking to Players

Talking to players is not an exact science; they are as different as anyone else you would encounter in any walk of life. What works with one may not work with another. Over time, the “book” on the player or captain will be known and will become a guide in dealing with him or her. Meanwhile, there are certain approaches that have a high degree of success and others that are sure to fail.

Here are 4 tips for talking to captains and players.

1. Do Not Answer Statements.

If it is not worded as a question, there is a good chance no reply is expected. The player may merely be venting. Some are just talking to themselves, “thinking out loud.” The context in which statements are made is also important; words can be literal or figurative. Some are clearly figurative statements that are also gallows humour, mere witticisms in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation – they are losing and cannot do anything about it. Any reaction to that type of statement from the captain or player will create a problem that does not exist.

“Call it the same for both sides” is often heard during games, should also be interpreted as a figurative statement. In one innings you give a wide, the opposing captain immediately blasts out the aforementioned cliché. If you recognise the comment as a virtual reflex from an aggrieved captain, keep calm and say, “Captain, you have not batted yet.”

The phrase is usually spoken out of frustration due to a perceived imbalance in calls. It can be taken literally as a statement that implies favouritism or cheating, but that is putting words in the captain’s mouth. Responding to such statements with threats of sanctions/reports is only likely to further aggravate the captain (because he did not mean that).

Another comment that is often spouted is, “That was a bad decision.” Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion; ignore it. However, the same comment is often personalized, as in, “You made a bad call.” That is more direct and meant to be a criticism or an insult. Thick skin is helpful in that case. On the other hand, an official may want to draw a line and make it known that type of comment is unacceptable.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Four Tips for Talking to Players

2. Do Not Escalate when Talking to Players.

Sometimes players merely want to extract a reaction and do not expect to effect any change in the officiating. When a player makes a comment, it is best to let it pass but note for future reference if repeated. Attempting to defuse the atmosphere with words probably is not going to work but pushing back or attempting one-upmanship will only worsen the situation.

Let us go back to the “bad call” comment.

When you get comments like this it is probably not a good idea to use unnecessarily sarcastic or inflammatory responses such as ‘Have I been consistently bad for both teams?’ Or if a player tells you, ‘You are the worst umpire we’ve ever had’ to say, ‘I guess I have to agree with you.’

Not only are rejoinders like that unnecessary, but they are also likely to be misinterpreted. The speaker wanted confrontation and got it. The feeble attempt at humour will almost certainly be viewed as flippancy and now the official is not only bad, he or she is a smart Alec.

Repetitive comments though change the landscape. Some players have developed the skill to push the envelope to the limit through repeated and voluminous commentary. Each comment is seemingly innocuous and within the limit of the Laws, but the incessant barrage eventually creates a distraction. Each official should privately establish his or her own threshold of tolerance. When the limit is reached, a polite warning is issued. If it persists, the appropriate penalty is issued.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Four Tips for Talking to Players

3. Explain the Rule.

The captain is entitled to an explanation of all unusual rulings or situations. This could be by either umpire but preferably by the two acting together as a team.

The legitimacy of the request should be determined by the context under which it is made and not by the tone of the player's voice.

Some advocate the use of the phrase "By Law" when making explanations. That certainly is OK, especially during a casual discussion. But in a heated environment, the retort is likely to be, "That is not what the Law says." Also, a snotty inflection on the last two words is not going to help.

In a confrontation, beginning with a Laws explanation is not advisable. The first priority is to determine the nature of the debate. In other words, make sure both parties are going to discuss the same issue. If you cannot agree on what transpired, there is minimal value in explaining the Law. In that case, you might try, "Well, if it happened the way you said it did, you are correct, but That is not how we saw it in that instant."

4. Watch Your Tone of Voice.

Your tone of voice when talking to players is such an important part of communication that it may often override the actual words you are using. The tone of voice is basically defined as the quality of a person's voice. Those qualities are made of the pitch, characteristics, and volume of the voice. The choice of words, the way they are delivered and the manner of speaking also make up the tone.

Whether you realize it or not, people develop much of their perception of you based on your tone of voice. Your tone reflects your attitude toward the audience. If your tone is clear, strong, and full of exuberance, they may think you are confident. People who speak haltingly or at a low volume may be considered weak, timid, or just plain afraid. If your voice carries an angry tone, the response is likely to be in kind.

Your voice probably stays the same from day to day. But your tone of voice changes all the time, whether you notice it or not. The tone of voice plays a major role in getting a message across and you need to think about it before you speak.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Maxims for Managing Conflict

When situations arise on the field, it is up to the officials to restore the peace and manage conflict. In managing conflict, showing a little empathy, demonstrating good listening skills, and providing people with options rather than threats go a long way.

The work of conflict management should begin well before any crisis has arisen — for officials it starts when first arriving and meeting participants. Not only does appearance matter, but how officials first communicate with people sets an important stage. Greet people with a smile. It is the universal greeting, and it disarms people. Introduce yourself and let coaches and players know you understand what they are saying.

This is the basic starting point for “Verbal Defence and Influence/ Conflict Management for Athletic Officials,” a management approach used to defuse conflict that Pete Jaskulski, an American Sports Official, developed from his years of experience in law enforcement and officiating.

Five Maxims

This conflict management program focuses on five maxims, which have an underlying theme of treating people with dignity by showing them respect.

1. Listen to people with all of your senses. There are things happening on the field and on the sidelines that will give the official a sense of how the game is progressing. Officials should be listening and not just hearing what is being said.
2. Ask, do not tell. All people, including coaches and players, want to be asked rather than being told what to do. Instead of telling a batter to get be ready for the bowler, an umpire can ask the batter to be ready. Ask them what they saw of a particular incident. That is a sign of respect and generates less resistance.
3. Explain why. Not every call needs to or should be explained, but when appropriate, give explanations. The first question you get asked is basically “why?” Explanations answer that question.
4. Offer options, not threats. By offering options you give the players the choice of which way to go. The options start with the positive choices and then outline the negative choices — but it is helpful to review the positive choice at the end.
5. Give a second chance. All sports are emotional. We have all done things that we later regretted. When it is appropriate, let the players think about the options you give them. Good officials can talk players out of a conflict situation.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Maxims for Managing Conflict

Dignity and Respect

The first step in treating others with dignity and respect — and receiving the same in return — starts the instant an official arrives at the ground your appearance affects how people perceive you and the respect people will give an official for the job that official is about to undertake.

In fact, the benefits go beyond perception. The benefits flow to the official in terms of his or her physiological response to the way he or she looks and comes across.

Officials should be conscious of their posture and how they stand. As you pull up your height, stress goes down and confidence goes up. When a player comes up to you, ‘clear the decks.’ Breathe in. Breathe out. That clears the mind and gets you more prepared for the action.

The first introductions in a contest are critical. They establish the pattern. Coaches and players are looking at you and sizing you up. The universal greeting is to introduce yourself to coaches and players, shake hands, smile and say a few words, but a lot of officials can struggle with that. Communication is a skill. Most officials practice going over the ground rules, but not the communication side of officiating.

Focus on basic human nature — and answering the four questions that people tend to ask.

- FIRST, PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW WHY SOMETHING HAPPENED.
- SECOND, THEY WANT TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
- THIRD, THEY’LL ASK WHERE YOU GET YOUR AUTHORITY.
- FINALLY, PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW, “WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?”

Applied to officiating circles, answering those questions builds a foundation for preparing to handle tough situations and defuse conflict in fast-paced, excitable environments.

What we do all comes back to answering those four questions, **everybody** wants those answers.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Things You Never Say to a Player or Coach

You will say all kinds of things when you are having a conversation, conference, discussion, talk, debate or heated exchange with a player.

But are there some comments that should never come out of your mouth?

An officials group asked members in a survey what not to say.

Some things are an obvious no-no, such as foul language.

Here are some of the other things your peers suggested are off-limits.

If you are currently using any of the following in your “conversations” with players, you might want to consider “retiring” them from your repertoire!

1. “One more word and you are on report!”

It is the classic overused phrase that needs to go away.

You can toss any other useless threats from your interaction vocabulary as well.

What happens if the player comes back with a compliment just to test you, or comes back with “word”? Are you prepared to report the player for that? Probably not.

That is why “one more word” is worthless at best and adding fuel to the fire at worst.

Do not commit yourself to an action. It is a no-win situation.

2. “Shut up.”

Now that is an example of fanning the flames.

It is antagonistic and unprofessional. Players should be allowed to have their say within reason.

If they cross the line and say something that warrants a reaction, use the tools within the Laws — penalty runs and reporting— to “shut up” player.

That is the professional approach. That should be your approach.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Things You Never Say to a Player or Coach

3. “You are wrong!”

If you do not tell a player he or she is wrong, that does not mean you do not think or know, in some cases, that the player is totally wrong!

It simply means you do not say it, because it will not lead to a positive result. Suggesting the player is “right” all the time is not the answer either.

Explaining what happened on a particular ball or why you called what you called will let the player know he or she is wrong (or right) without saying it.

Sometimes telling the player, “That is not what I saw,” serves to mitigate the situation and allows both parties to move on.

Alternatively saying “If it happened the way you say it did, I got it wrong, but That is not how I saw it.” works because you are not admitting a mistake, putting up a defence or ignoring the player completely.

4. “Are you serious?”

Sometimes what comes out of the mouths of players is so far-fetched and ridiculous that you want to question their mindset. But that is not the right approach.

Players do care about the outcome of the game, and as a result, rational thinking can be lost at times. Assume they are serious. Keep your sense of humour about you and do not take some statements too seriously and you’ll survive and thrive on the field.

5. “That is not my call.”

Officiating is a team sport, just like any of the others. You and your colleague are in it together, so you need to act like it.

That statement can be taken to mean two things: “My colleague is to blame,” or, “I saw what happened, but decided not to call it.”

Both are bad.

While it may not have been a call in your area of jurisdiction, there are plenty of things you can say without shifting the negative spotlight on your partner. If you did see the play and could have helped your partner call something he or she missed, it is your fault for not doing it.

Getting the call right is your number-one priority.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Things You Never Say to a Player or Coach

6. “It is just a game.”

You may argue, “It is just a game. Players shouldn’t act as if it is a life-or-death situation.”

No one is suggesting that some players do not need to learn some perspective.

The key is that it is not your job to teach it to them, and that phrase is not the way to teach that, anyway.

You might as well be saying, “Who cares? I don’t,” because that is how it is going to be interpreted.

Games are important to the players, no matter the level or sport, and that is not going to change. Just as officiating is important to you. Respecting the game and the participants is important, whether or not it is reciprocated.

The list can go on and on. Maybe you have heard other no-no comments come out of your fellow officials’ mouths or your own that shouldn’t have. What you say can make or break your career. So, remain calm and in control during talks with players, and think before you speak. That will help eliminate a good percentage of problems.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Seven Steps to Better Conversations

Dealing with adversarial relationships can be tough. These seven tips to better conversations will make your difficult job a bit easier.

1. Pause before Responding.

Let the other person get more words in if he wants. Do not cut him off; that only exacerbates the situation. In responding, avoid using words like “but” and “however” because they usually cancel out the first part of a sentence, lessening the message. “I understand the situation but we’re going to have to ...” is an example of how the word “but” lessened the effect of the initial positive statement “I understand.”

2. Discreetly Praise Players.

Congratulate them on good plays and encourage sportsmanship. You can win over many players with a kind word; that can help you later in the game if problems arise.

3. No matter whom you are dealing with, apply the “golden rule.”

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Be reasonable with the words you choose and the tone you use. It will go a long way to handling situations effectively.

4. It is OK to say you made a Mistake.

Honesty is your best policy. Under no circumstances should you try to lie your way out of trouble. Recipients know and then they will think you cannot be trusted. Lying fuels their negative perceptions of officials.

An old school of thought in officiating was, “Never admit making a mistake.” That theory has gone away over time. If you blew a call, it is OK to admit it quietly to the player. Many times, they will respect you more for that than if you tried to twist the truth and equivocate. Most players understand you cannot change judgment calls, but admitting you missed it often ends the argument. Do it too often, however, and your reputation will suffer.

5. If a Player is begging, listen to that person.

If a reply is necessary, reply with an even tone. Be brief. Do not use sarcasm or put-downs. Acknowledge that you have heard and understood the complaint. That is not an admission of guilt or error on your part; it merely shows the person you are listening. Many times, all the person wants is to be heard.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Seven Steps to Better Conversations

6. You may be able to smile or use humour to diffuse a potentially volatile situation.

Be careful; what you think might be funny may not be to the other person, thus adding to the problem. However, smiles and a deflective word can work in the heat of battle. An official who can chuckle or smile is in control. An official who cannot see the humour in a situation may be perceived as uptight.

However, officials should not get into joke-telling. It is simply too dangerous because people differ in what amuses them. What you might think is a great joke might offend the listener. Try humour sparingly and make it as light as possible.

7. Do not ever utter the phrase, “It is just a game.”

Few phrases turn participants to rage quicker than that one. Remember, they have worked all week, all season and all their careers for that game. It is critically important to them, no matter what the sport or level. That phrase is often interpreted by coaches and players as a flippant “I don’t care” response. Basically, it is demeaning.

Follow those seven tips when dealing with players and coaches and the relationships developed will be positive for the game.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Part 3.

The Mental Side of Officiating





South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



An A-Z of Mental Performance Fundamentals

A list to keep you officiating at your best. When facing adversity, this will give you a strategy to go to. You do not rise to the occasion; you sink to the level of your training. By developing these mental performance skills, you will raise the level of your officiating.

ADVERSITY

How do you respond to adversity? Do you get fascinated or frustrated? As officials, adversity comes with the territory. You face it nearly every game as well as in your daily lives. Learn to embrace and prepare for adversity. It is merely a bend in the road, not the end of the road. If you are struggling with overcoming an obstacle, change your strategy and attack it from a different angle.

BREATHE

Learning how to breathe properly is the single most important skill that you can implement into your games and regular life immediately. Before a game when your mind starts to race, your heart starts to beat faster and you have that familiar nervous energy, what do you do? Embrace the feeling and take five deep breaths. Inhale through your nose for four seconds, hold for two seconds and exhale through your mouth for six seconds.

CONFIDENCE

How many times have you heard that you need to umpire with more confidence? Confidence comes with more game experience for sure, but a trick you can start using is to act confident. Confidence is not a feeling; it is an action! You can act confidently by being big with your body language, projecting your voice and using snap, command, and energy with your signals.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline and self-control are skills that go hand-in-hand. Discipline is the ability to establish great patterns of behaviour so that you can make most decisions on autopilot. Having self-control means you can put off what you do not want at the moment and concentrate on the necessary. Discipline and self-control will help you reach your big-picture goals.

ELITE MINDSET

Think of an elite mindset as the foundation to mental training fundamentals. Sports officials with an elite mindset seek feedback and are never satisfied with being told they did a good job. They are always searching for ways to improve. The alternative is when officials possess an average mindset and believe they have a limited capacity to grow their current skill set. Developing an elite mindset is totally trainable. Which mindset do you have?



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



An A-Z of Mental Performance Fundamentals

FOCUS

Focus is your ability to stay in the present and awareness is recognizing when you no longer have present moment focus. Think of this skill as traffic signal lights: A green light means you are in control or focused. A yellow light means you are losing control. A red light means you have lost control. How many times have you made an incorrect call or had a bad interaction with a player, and not been able to flush it and refocus?

GRATITUDE

Have you ever heard the saying that it is impossible to be grateful and sad at the same time? Research indicates this is true. A good way to train yourself to be more grateful is to run a compliments log. Record your good games, good reports, compliments from players and coaches and top decisions and go back to them when you need a boost.

HABITS

There are good habits and routines as well as bad ones. Develop good habits and routines before, during and after games. This will allow you to perform consistently at your best. Developing healthy habits and routines will significantly reduce physical, mental and emotional fatigue because you will not have to waste energy worrying about what to do next.

INTENT

Identify what your goals are and set SMART objectives to reach them.

Write them down and share them with a mentor.

It is OK to say no to people and things that do not align with your objectives, your daily interactions, routines, and self-talk should all be in alignment with them.

JOY

Why do you officiate? Many of you have a passion for the game and want to stay involved in a sport that means so much and brings joy. When dealing with difficult people or situations, remember why you officiate. Keeping your eye on your “why” will help keep you on track toward your goals.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



An A-Z of Mental Performance Fundamentals

KNOWLEDGE

It is a must that officials know the rules and mechanics of their respective sports. Between learning the mental performance skills, studying the rules, breaking down video and talking with mentors, there are a lot of ways to improve your knowledge. Challenge yourself to never stop learning. Read books on personal development and communication. If you do not like to read, check out audio books or podcasts while you are traveling to your games. Always be working on yourself as well as your craft.

LEADERSHIP

Leaders are officials who know how to develop trust and have a proven track record of success by sticking to their process. Leaders are mentally tough and masters of the mental game. If you do not already have a mentor, find one immediately at the level above you. It is just as important that you mentor other officials. Once you start teaching and training, it deepens your understanding.

MOTIVATION

Motivation keeps you working toward your goals. What is the hardest part of going on a run? Believe it or not, it is putting your shoes on! It is the start that stops most people. Action precedes motivation. In this example, motivation to run would come after you started running, not before. Commitment to your process will keep you coming back even when you are not 100 percent. If you have 80 percent to give, the trick is to give 100 percent of your 80 percent.

NUTRITION

Food and exercise are proven to be linked to mental performance. Think of yourself as a sports car. Would you put diesel fuel in a Ferrari? Develop good habits and routines with your eating and exercise. However, these are only two components of officiating performance. Do not fall into the trap and think you can stop there. You must work on the rest of the mental game to become an elite official.

OWNERSHIP

Take ownership of your own development and progression. Others can help you along the way but nobody but you can make it happen.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



An A-Z of Mental Performance Fundamentals

PROCESS

Process over outcome-based goals — this is the secret to making dreams a reality. Many people write down goals and think they are done. Unfortunately, this will rarely accomplish much and will lead to disappointment. Goals should be challenging, specific and measurable. When setting goals, think of where you want to be in 3-5 years and write them down. Then you must reverse engineer into short-term goals and daily tasks. The journey is the reward, not the destination. In other words, enjoy the process.

QUALITY

Have you ever heard the expression, “Practice makes perfect”? – not if the practice is flawed. Always choose quality over quantity in everything you do.

RECOGNIZE

Recognize, release, and refocus. This is the mistake/recovery strategy that many professional athletes use when they are in yellow and red lights (covered in the “Focus” section). It is easy to apply to officiating. When you recognize you have lost control (missed a call), do a physical action, find a focal point, and take a deep breath, say a verbal cue to yourself and take another deep breath. Doing this allows you to release the last play and get back to the present (next ball) before things start to snowball.

SELF-TALK

What does that little voice in your head say? All officials have thought patterns whether they realize it or not. Make the decision to use positive self-talk instead of negative. Train yourself to replace negative thoughts with positive ones. You can do this with confidence conditioning statements before and during games.

Your best friend on the field should be yourself.

TIME

Time is the great equalizer and one thing that is consistent for everyone. The most successful people are great managers of time. How do you manage your time? Managing your time can lead to increased productivity, instead of just being busy. Utilizing a time-management strategy that works for you can limit fatigue, allowing you to focus on your most important tasks and be on time to games and other important commitments.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



An A-Z of Mental Performance Fundamentals

UNIFORM

Make it a point to have good physical conditioning and to look professional in your uniform. Always pass the eye test with observers, colleagues, and players as this will lead to credibility.

VISUALIZATION

Learning how to develop this mental skill set will set you apart and make a major difference in your performance. Develop a daily routine where you can recall past games and rehearse your upcoming game. Everything should happen twice — first in your mind and then in real life. Meditation is a great tool to add to your routines as well. It will improve your focus and provide many other positive health benefits. There are many types of meditation. Find one that works for you and commit to it. If you are not sure how to get started, you can find plenty of information on the internet.

W.I.N.

W.I.N. the day. If you always focus on “what’s important now,” you will win the day. Attack each daily decision with this mentality. If you regularly win the day, you will be locked in on the process and making progress toward what you want the most.

EXCELLENCE

Many officials are perfectionists, but there has been no perfect game officiated to date. Officiating is the one job where you are expected to start perfect and get better from there. When the game competition gets more challenging, striving for perfection can hold you back. Those who strive for perfection, officiate safe. Those who strive for excellence, officiate positively.

YOURSELF

In life and officiating, you only have control over yourself and the decisions you make. Instead of worrying about others, you should always be competing with and focused on yourself. Keep it simple and focus on the two things that you can control, which are your attitude and effort. Be positive and give 100 percent of what you have.

ZZZ’S

Do not underestimate the importance of a good night’s rest. For optimal mental performance, you should make sleep as consistent as possible by going to bed near the same time every night as well as waking up around the same time every morning. Think of sleep as your mobile phone charger. Would you want to leave the house in the morning with 10 percent battery life? Power naps and meditation are great ways to supplement your sleep needs.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Seven Aspects of Emotional Control

When people say, “There is no need to get emotional,” That is probably truer for officials than for the average person. However, in front of a couple of intense captains and a bunch of psyched-up, keyed-up and fired-up players, emotional control is easier said than done.

1. Do not ignore your emotions — control them.

Out on the field you do not have the luxury to feel what the average person feels — you are an official and there is a job to do. But emotions should not be ignored, either. Controlling your emotions means controlling your game and controlling your game is your job. To be effective, an official needs to be a rock, but not a robot. A listener, but not a passive abuse-taker. A professional, but not an egomaniac.

2. Confidence

Confidence is one of the “good” emotions that you probably do not need to control too much (unless you become overconfident, which could lead you to become arrogant, which leads to egomania!).

Being able to handle pressure starts with confidence in your ability. You must develop a level of confidence that you know the game and you know what you are doing out there. You develop a feel for the game and what is going on around you. It allows you to defuse problems before they happen. Knowledge is power and when you have mastered your game, a sense of control will follow.

3. Stay cool when the pressure gets hot.

All the knowledge in the world will only take you so far when there is a lot on the line. Let us face it, the outcomes of some games have implications for promotion/relegation etc. and mean a lot to the players.

You may not oversee events involving tens of millions of dollars, with maybe hundreds of millions of people watching and careers hanging in the balance but there is pressure there and you cannot deny it.

So, do not think pressure only happens at the professional level. The folks sitting on the boundary at an Under 13 game can be just as, and sometimes more, personally invested in the outcome of a game. The ire of a handful of parents can be more disquieting than the anonymous roar of 20,000 spectators.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Seven Aspects of Emotional Control

4. Develop personal stress management skills.

It is essential to develop stress-management skills so you can keep focused during the actual game, when the pressure gets turned up. A big mistake officials make is trying to pretend they have no emotions and nothing can get to them. Though it does not pay to display your emotions for everyone to see, denying your feelings exist can also lead to trouble.

Self-talk can help. Instead of trying to be an unfeeling robot, you are better off being able to identify when you are feeling stressed and then having a strategy to deal with it.

It can be as simple as developing a quick conversation with yourself:

- Acknowledge the pressure, direct your mind to focus on the game and assure yourself that you are in control in a relaxed, calm way.
- Fairly assess your performance and commit to minimizing mistakes, but also be prepared to move on and develop a tolerance for being less than perfect.
- Be wary of when your internal conversation becomes hostile. If you find your self-talk starts to run along the lines of, “Damn, I blew that one!” “I don’t belong out here!” “I stink!” or other similarly denigrating comments, stop it immediately, and approach your thinking in a calmer way by turning an intense focus back to the game.

5. When it starts to get ugly.

Let us face it, as an official, you are not going to be the most popular person on the field. You are often going to be the scapegoat for the frustration of players, coaches, and fans. You probably already know not to expect hugs and kisses, but what about when the people involved really start to push your buttons?

Maintaining composure can be a real challenge when the words get unkind, and the talk gets personal. It is not a question of having a tough skin; you have to anticipate what might come and deal with it using the tools available to you under the Laws. The most important skill to have is the ability to avoid taking anything too personally, which you can do with some mental strategy.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Seven Aspects of Emotional Control

6. Officiating is not designed to get people to like you.

It is essential that you keep in mind up front that officiating is not an activity designed to get people to like you. You may love the game; you may love staying close to it, but do not come into it thinking you are going to make friends with all the players. If you have a strong need for approval from others, spending your weekends officiating sporting events is maybe not the place for you. Take an inventory of what draws you to the sport and be honest with yourself. If getting lots of slaps on the back and camaraderie from the others involved in the game is what drives you, maybe your time would be better spent driving the team bus or manning the drinks jug.

Women often face challenges men do not, especially if they are officiating games involving male athletes. On top of the usual, “You are blind!” comments, women will hear catcalls suggesting they aren’t good enough or should “go back to the kitchen.” This sort of thing should be reported to any league whether it came from players or spectators.

If this sort of comment crosses the line, then deal with it using the Laws and your colleague for support. Then re-focus your energy into the game, not on the negative comments or even desperately trying to prove anything to anyone. Whether it is a personal attack, unfair criticism or just plain harassment, the key to keeping cool and performing well is maintaining your focus where it should be — on the game.

7. When you know you made a mistake.

Every official blows it once in a while and everyone knows it. The adage that no one’s perfect really is not much of a comfort in our business despite its truth, but there are steps you can take to keep your focus after the occasional and inevitable mistake occurs.

Sometimes — not always — admitting a mistake to a captain/player/coach earns their respect. But doing that too often destroys your credibility. Insisting on perfection in your own performance will backfire, not just in the relationships you develop with the players and coaches, but it will also interfere with your performance. It sets you up for unrealistic expectations and you will wind up trying to convince yourself that you are always right or feeling that you are incompetent and don’t belong in the role.

The often-heard post-match cry from the umpire of “I got the decision right – just look and see what it says in the book” is the sound of somebody deluding themselves and shutting the door on any chance of learning and improvement.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Seven Aspects of Emotional Control

In summary

Instead of demanding perfection of yourself, your focus should be on doing the best you can and searching for ways to improve.

All things in balance. Keeping your emotions under control is a matter of keeping everything at the game, and in the rest of your life, in perspective. Balance is the key. Too much of anything — mistakes, ego, abuse from the spectators, etc. — can throw your emotions all out of whack. Not everyone is born with the skill to perform with grace under pressure, but it is something you can learn. The key is to know your game, know yourself and understand human nature.

If your motivation is to be the best official possible — and that is a pretty good motivator for any official — putting it all together is simply a matter of practice and self-awareness.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Tips and Tools to Help You Look at Yourself

Self-Evaluation is Critical.

Having both the ability and willingness to self-evaluate is critical to becoming a better official. Whatever level you operate at, you must be able to critique yourself and be open to being critiqued by others.

No matter how good you are in the day job, you are not at the top of your officiating ladder. You might be the best in your local area, but as you travel to other competitions and out of our comfort zone, you are going to run into a speed of play and a level of intensity that is above your current abilities.

Being able to handle, and then get comfortable, at those new levels takes self-evaluation.

Look at yourself. Recognize your shortcomings. Understand what you could do better.

Fitness? Don't study the Laws and Regulations enough? Quick temper? Too technical? Once you know what you need to work on, you can start to improve. Wanting to improve is a sign of having a good attitude.

You must want to improve before you can improve.

To quote two-time NFL Superbowl referee Ed Hochuli, "If you believe there is no room for improvement, get out of officiating because the next step is an obvious decline. That is embarrassing to you and your fellow officials. Every year, I am less content with my own abilities. I see so many great officials and I realize how many things I have to work on."

Officials tend to want to hear what they did wrong, but part of self-evaluation, just like part of a good assessment, is to know what you did right. What are your strengths? What do you do well? Decision making? Dealing with players? Getting a team captain to help you with a troublesome player?

1. Tools

Keep a note of things that happened during the game – the good the bad and the ugly – paper notes at breaks in the game, electronic notes afterwards – whatever suits you.

At any stage of the season review those notes for trends and keep potential deficiencies right next to teams, age groups, score, what time of the day, how many games that week - might be either fitness or concentration etc.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Tips and Tools to Help You Look at Yourself

Self-Evaluation is Critical.

2. Not there yet?

There are going to be aspects of your game that you will want to improve. Read books, speak with a mentor, and talk to an instructor or assessor.

Get the tools you need.

Then practice.

Then practice some more.

Try your new skills at lower game levels. Ask to be assigned to a lower division to work on a new or improved skill.

3. Laws and Regulations.

If knowledge is your downfall, there are online training packages freely available or talk to other officials from the same league about more local regulations. If regulation differences are a problem, studying the different rules books regularly is useful.

4. Mechanics.

The best way to fix poor mechanics is through video. Seeing for yourself what others see will be the most effective feedback. From then on, a mirror is your best friend. If you can get access to footage from games you have recently worked, that will help immensely. If you cannot, then plan to have someone record your next game and start to keep a record of your improvements.

5. Officiate who you are.

If you are not a humorous person, leave that out of your game plan, even if suggested by an assessor or observer. If you lack an authoritative aspect to your personality, do not try to play the bad cop on the field. If you are the silent type, do not try to become a salesman and talk players out of bad behaviour. If you have a wide array of facial expressions use the appropriate one to send your message to players.

Forcing any type of behaviour that you do not have naturally will come off as fake or ineffective most of the time. If you want to add something to your skill set, then practicing in front of a mirror, then with friends or partners is wise. As with changes to your mechanics, trying new skills at lower levels is always advised.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Tips and Tools to Help You Look at Yourself

Self-Evaluation is Critical.

6. Take time to look inside.

No matter your level of officiating, when you are working a full schedule you may not have time to spend contemplating the finer points of your officiating skills and personality. Find the time. When you have downtime, make a point to really think about the criticism you have received over the past weeks. Even if you brushed it off before, was there a grain of truth there somewhere? Have you really been the type of colleague you would want on your side if the roles were reversed? Over the years, have you spent as much time as you should have on the Laws, mechanics and intangible skills that are fundamental to being a competent official?

These questions and many more are the type only you can answer for yourself and only if you take the time.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Ways to Bounce Back from a Bad Game

Ever had one of those games when, for whatever reason, you are off the pace?

Whether it is because you were distracted by issues that have nothing to do with the game, the sloppiness of the play made it a difficult game to concentrate on or you just plain messed up a few calls, you are not going to feel good after every game.

Learning how to “get over it” is vital if you are to avoid a repeat in your next game.

Here are some tips for getting over those “That is-a-game- I-want-to-forget” blues.

1. Do not make excuses or blame others for your performance.

Some officials who have a bad game may make excuses for why they did not do so well, instead of looking at themselves. Evaluate your performance and learn from your mistakes. Regardless of how good you may be, you will never be perfect. The key is to learn from your mistakes and not to repeat them.

2. Focus on the bigger picture.

You will officiate in many games. Do not focus on that one game or incident on which you were not at your best. Instead, realize you have many chances for redemption. Use your less-than-stellar performance as a means of determining what you need to improve on for future games. Try to have a more persistent attitude for your next event. Many officials who make mistakes in an important event tend to doubt themselves for a while. Do not fall into that trap. Accept the fact that you made a mistake and that things will go differently the next time around. Determination is the key in getting over any bad performance.

3. Use your imagination.

Before your next game, visualize yourself nailing one tough call after another. That will better prepare you to perform for real when the time comes. Self-visualization is a great way to reduce stress while boosting your self-confidence.

4. Ask for help.

There will be times when you know things went badly but you are not sure why.

If so, talk to other officials or a mentor who may be able to pinpoint what went wrong. Ask how they have faced a similar situation or how they might have reacted if it had been their game. There is nothing wrong with asking for help. Even the best officials get advice from others.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six Ways to Bounce Back from a Bad Game

5. Seek positive reinforcement.

Keep a notebook with positive statements or sayings that make you feel good. Whenever you come across an inspirational quote or supportive anecdote, jot it down in your notebook. At lunch or after a game, pull out your notebook and read those statements. It may give you the spirit boost you need.

6. Don't panic.

Some officials start to doubt themselves when things do not go well, fearing they have suddenly lost their officiating mojo. Do not put pressure on yourself when things do not go right. Go back to the basics and remember past successes. Those memories will get you through the tough times. Enjoy the fact you are an official. You will not be at your best all of the time and there will always be those days where you wish you stayed in bed. Do not compare yourself to others who may be more successful than you. Focus on your own performance and develop your own personal goals in achieving your maximum performance.

Adapted from Stanley Popovich, Carnegie, Pa. USA



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Steps to Stop Self-Criticism Detracting from Your Successes.

Think about how many times in your career you received real-time praise from a fan, a coach or a player. Compare that with the number of times you received real-time signs of disapproval from fans, coaches or players.

After a game, do you debrief and discuss the good stuff, what were the memorable aspects that got your attention?

What are the most salient memories of your officiating career? Do you remember the great call or decision you made in the closing moments of a close contest when all the fans praised your decision? Or do you remember the call you made that led to booing, being snubbed by players or even insulted?

Research suggests when individuals have been asked to recall an important, emotional event, by a ratio of 4-1, subjects recall a negative event. (And this is from an American paper, Brits tend to be even more negative!)

The tendency to focus and linger more on negative events than positive events and to weigh negative events more heavily than positive ones refers to a psychological phenomenon called the negativity bias. That bias is an evolutionary adaptation that serves to keep us safe. Attending to dangerous or harmful stimuli in our environment is what ensures our safety. If we can remember the dangers and threats in our environment, the less likely we are to repeat them. The negativity bias ensures our survival. It may protect us in a life-or-death situation, or it may simply serve to protect us from blowing a decision in a close contest, thus ensuring the survival of our officiating career and our reputation.

In case you're thinking that you're an eternal optimist who never lets the bad get to you, consider the following areas in which a negativity bias is present.

Health and Happiness – The difference between being moderately sick and very sick is relatively powerful, while the difference between being moderately well and very well has little to no impact on happiness. Health mainly affects happiness when health is bad.

Relationships – When negative behaviours outweigh positive behaviours, the relationship is more likely to fail. A greater number of positive to negative interactions is essential for a relationship to succeed.

Information and Thought Processing – Bad events receive more thorough processing than information about good events which leads to enhanced memory for bad material. The more we ruminate over bad memories, the more salient they become.

Reputations – Bad reputations are easy to acquire but difficult to lose, whereas good reputations are difficult to acquire but easy to lose.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Steps to Stop Self-Criticism Detracting from Your Successes.

First Impressions – As negative information receives more processing and contributes more strongly than does positive information. Negative information obtained from a first impression is retained longer and is more difficult to overcome.

Feedback and Evaluations – Research shows that individuals recognize bad feedback as more powerful than good feedback. Therefore, we try to minimize the bad feedback rather than maximize the positive feedback. With workplace evaluations, supervisors tend to weigh more heavily the negative outcomes than the positive outcomes.

Online Reviews – Marketing research indicates that in online reviews, positive reviews outnumber negative reviews by a ratio of approximately 8-1, but it's the negative reviews that have greater effect on purchase behaviour.

Political Campaign Advertising – Approximately 80 percent of all campaign advertisements are negative. Why? Because the negative information gets our attention and forces us to process the message more deeply.

In short, bad is stronger than good because attending to the threats and dangers in our environment increase our odds of survival. So, if humans are predisposed to that bias, how do we overcome it?

Since officials are constantly in challenging, evaluative situations in which praise is rare; where we're subjected to criticism and constant review and we work in high-stress environments, we must actively work to overcome a bias toward negativity. Constantly focusing on or dwelling on the negatives can wear us down. It can make us feel like we're not progressing. It can lead to fatigue and burnout. We've got to learn to overcome it. That doesn't happen without some effort. We have to take active steps.

1. Adapt – When bad things happen, it usually indicates a need for change. Bad things lead to adaptation. If we adapt in the face of changing circumstances, we're more likely to not only survive, but thrive.

One of the best methods of increasing survival is to be closely attuned to the current environment. Think about the technological changes to sport. Video, online streaming, television broadcasts, cell phone cameras — they've all upped the ante and put officials under increased scrutiny. That doesn't necessarily apply to our level of officiating or mean that we need to officiate differently. It could though mean that rigidity in terms of maintaining the old ways can be damaging to one's career. Adapt and learn to embrace the changes in the game.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Steps to Stop Self-Criticism Detracting from Your Successes.

- 2. Find Meaning, Move On** – Some evidence suggests that negatives cause people to engage in an increased search for meaning. We ask, “Why did that happen?” Consistent with the negativity bias, unpleasant events stimulate the need to find meaning to a greater degree than pleasant events. If bad feelings immediately wear off, people might repeat mistakes.

Officials can do that in debriefs with colleagues, mentors or in the car on the way home in your head. We examine what went wrong, why and how we could handle the situation differently. We consider alternative outcomes in the interest of fairness, impartiality and accuracy. There is value in that. It makes us better.

But once we are able to explain the play, it’s time to let it go. Ruminating on the past can affect the ability to move forward. Rehashing bad memories can create a sense of hopelessness and make it difficult to feel optimistic.

- 3. Practice “Realistic Optimism”** – Tell yourself the most hopeful and empowering story possible about any given situation without denying or minimizing the facts. “Yes, I missed that call, but I’ve never seen that happen before.” Or, “My eyes left the batter too soon and I missed the Hit wicket. Stay with the batter.” Learning to put your attention where it serves you best requires the same sort of deliberate practice necessary to build any new skills.

- 4. Create More Goods** – If bad is stronger than good and the bad linger longer and are more powerful than the goods, then can good ever overcome bad? The answer is yes, good can overcome bad by force of numbers. It is said that at least five positives (in the form of compliments, praise, non-verbal gestures, etc.) are needed to overcome one negative attack or threat.

Make an effort to recognize and appreciate the good that you have. Celebrate small successes, be thankful, show gratitude and support others. Treat bad experiences or slip-ups on the field as isolated events. One slip-up does not make a bad official. Rather than reflect on the perceived shortcomings during a match, reflect on all the calls that were correct, all the decisions that maintained the flow of the match, all the calls that did not result in boos.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Steps to Stop Self-Criticism Detracting from Your Successes.

5. Reframe Feedback – The nature of sports officiating means that we often receive immediate feedback about our performance. Unfortunately, the feedback is generally negative. Fans boo. Coaches yell, argue or become demonstrable. Players express disgust. We don't often get applauded for making good calls. Instead of allowing the boos to capture your attention and focus your thoughts on what went wrong, consider all the plays, contacts and decisions made when the fans didn't react. When you reframe the situation in a positive way, it makes a tremendous difference. Your accuracy rate is very high.

We can also learn to love when the fans boo. Why? Fan intensity reminds us that we're a part of something bigger than ourselves. It shows there's a passion for the game. Part of the fan experience is supporting one's team. When a call doesn't go their way, fans express it. That doesn't mean the officials were wrong, just that an unpopular decision was made.

Our view of the world has a fundamental tendency to tilt toward the negative. Officials must work harder to see the upside.

6. Highlight the Positive – Think about the direction that our post-match debriefs take. We tend to discuss the controversies, problems, uncertainties and teachable moments. There is value in that. and it shouldn't be overlooked. It serves as motivation to keep learning and growing.

However, we often tend to gloss over or overlook entirely the good calls, the good positioning, the good teamwork and communication and the improvements made during a match. Include them in a fair and honest debrief. If we hear and discuss only the negative, then the negativity bias prevails.

That doesn't pertain only to post-match debriefs. There are opportunities within a match to deliver positive feedback to colleagues. An appropriately timed thumbs up, a nod or a smile in a partner's direction does wonders to reinforce a good call, to maintain attention and to shake off a mistake. Learn how to deliver positive feedback during a match and afterward.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Steps to Stop Self-Criticism Detracting from Your Successes.

- 7. Build Community** – Research shows that contributing to the common welfare of a community is better than thinking only of ourselves. It's uplifting and gives us a sense of belonging. The role of community in the officiating cadre is significant. Few people outside the world of officiating can relate to what we do. We need the support of each other at all times, but especially when the stakes are high.
Show support for the officiating cadre. Take a moment to congratulate and cheer on fellow umpires and scorers. Keep the dialogue on social media positive. Realize sticky situations become teachable moments that will make us all better. Show empathy when a fellow umpire struggles and cheer on others' successes because they reflect positively on each of us.
- 8. Savour the Experience** – If we are predisposed to collecting and clinging to negative experiences, counteract that by intentionally developing a collection of positive memories. As we fill our memory with more positive experiences, through the act of savouring, we become less reliant on external positive stimuli around us. Take some time after each match — in the debrief, as you travel home or while chatting with a friend — to reflect on the match. You've just had a shared experience together. Spend some time savouring it. That solidifies it in our memory and provides material to keep us going and enjoying the game. In your notebook, write down the good.
Good can triumph over bad by superior force of numbers. Many good events are needed to overcome the psychological effects of a single bad one.

Let's not dwell on the one thing that didn't go well and instead focus on the 10 things that did go well. While negativity is an inherent part of the human experience, it can be overcome with the right mind-set.

Suzanne Dodd of Greenville, S.C. in Referee Magazine



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Three Lessons to Exercise Control over Your Emotions (A Summary of the Chimp Paradox)

The Chimp Paradox by Stephen Peters, uses a simple analogy to help you take control of your emotions and act in your own, best interest, whether it is in making decisions, communicating with others, or your health and happiness.

Here are 3 lessons that will help you exercise control over your emotions:

1. Your brain has two major parts, which often collide, so it is important to observe them.
2. Humans have four modes of communication and knowing which one you are in will help get your message across.
3. The chimp's sneakiest trick is wanting more.

Lesson 1: There are two competing forces in your brain, so learn to recognize them.

One of the easiest ways for us to learn is through analogy. That is why, when Steve replaced two complex-sounding names for parts of our brain with simpler images, he made a brilliant move as a teacher. He describes our prefrontal cortex as the human part of our brain and our limbic system as our inner chimp. The human acts rationally, based on facts, but the chimp only decides using emotions.

As you can imagine, this leads to problems whenever the two clash or the wrong one ends up in charge.

Let us say you got cut up in traffic and almost suffered a crash. You come home to your partner and share this disturbing event. Trying to calm you down, they tell you that, luckily, it all turned out fine.

If you are still in chimp mode, you might take that as criticism and start an argument. Only if the human is in charge can you see this fact clearly, calm down, and move on without harping on the situation.

Therefore, the most important thing is to start observing your own state of mind. When you start stressing out, ask yourself: "Who's in charge here? Do I want to feel and act this way? Or is the chimp taking over?" Learning to observe this is the first, big step in mastering your inner chimp.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Three Lessons to Exercise Control over Your Emotions (A Summary of the Chimp Paradox)

Lesson 2: We communicate in four distinct modes, which determine how to best say what you want to say.

In the scenario above, your partner cannot know what mental state you are in before making a comment. It is hard to guess sometimes, so it is normal that you will often be wrong about others too. As a result, there are four communication scenarios:

1. You are using your human brain and so is your conversation partner.
2. You are in human mode, but the person you are talking to behaves like a chimp.
3. You are the chimp, while the other person's human is in charge.
4. Both of you behave like chimps.

The first scenario is ideal, two and three are tough to figure out, but can be handled once you know what you are dealing with. It is the fourth scenario that is to be avoided because it most often ends in an ugly fight. Besides making an effort to recognize the modes of all participants, you should address problems immediately and directly.

Explaining your reasoning in an assertive, but a respectful manner is the best way to avoid emotional responses and bring back others to the rational plane of thinking.

Lesson 3: Since the chimp always wants more, it can become a fundamental obstacle to your long-term happiness.

This is something I struggle with: We should celebrate and appreciate our achievements as they come. I always have goals, but when I achieve them, I tend to gloss over, not really take much of a break, and immediately dig into the next challenge. That is not healthy.

It is also the chimp's sneakiest trick. By always wanting more, he gets you to chase an illusionary, perfect state in which you can finally be happy – but only once you have the next thing. Of course, there is always a next thing and that feeling of relief never comes. This is how people end up winning Olympic gold medals without being any happier for it.

So, remember: Your inner chimp will always dangle the next reward in front of you. Do not let it ruin your long-term happiness. When you achieve something you are proud of, take a break, celebrate, and learn to appreciate what you have.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Part 4.

Self-Improvement





South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Ways to Improve Your Game

Tens of thousands of words have been devoted to helping officials improve their performance and this list is not intended to be the definitive document – just some ideas gathered from a number of different sports and adapted to fit in with cricket officials.

1. Watch them warm-up.

Make use of that dead time before the game. Watch players warm up. Does the spinner seem to be getting turn? How accurate is that quick bowler? Which outfielder has the strongest arm? Which batter doesn't move his feet in the nets?" Those things and more provide info that might come in handy. (Obviously, this means getting to the ground well in advance of the scheduled start time)

2. Pick up your presence.

Presence is hard to define, but you want it. Physical appearance is part of it, but it goes further. How you stand before the start of the game, shoulders upright with head held high, never folding the arms in front of the body, gives an air of confidence and approachability that is noticed. Look people in the eye while communicating and keep your cool when emotions around you boil over as well.

3. Get noticed.

Has anyone ever told you that the best-officiated games are the ones in which you do not know the officials are there? Not always true. You want players and fans to notice you positively for your appearance, your movement, proper application of regulations and great calls. Officials who are not noticed are not doing something right.

4. Do not go there.

Do you exhibit the appearance of being impartial? Good officials know the difference between perception and reality and act accordingly. Do not be extra friendly with one of the coaches prior to a game, just because you have seen his or her team more often than the other coach's team. Be upfront with conflicts of interest to your appointments officer, even if you know you can be impartial no matter what.

5. Call what must be called.

There is a difference between preventive officiating and failing to penalize when in possession of knowledge that a violation occurred. Officials who cannot or will not issue sanctions according to the Laws of the game cannot, by definition, call a good game, nor can they practice effective game management.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Ways to Improve Your Game

6. Adjust your attitude.

There is an old officiating axiom: “If you go to the game with a bad attitude, you’ll have a bad game.” Your attitude affects those around you. A positive attitude helps you perform difficult tasks. If you have had a bad day on your job or a driver cuts you up on your way to a game, set aside minor frustrations and strive to develop a positive attitude toward the game.

7. Move on from mistakes.

Remember, you only have control of the present moment. The call you made five minutes ago is beyond your control and the future is always out of your reach. Keep an active mind and stop yourself whenever your mind wants to shift back to a “mistake” or worries about what is going to happen.

8. Focus throughout

Focus and keep your attention on the task at hand — the game you are working. Whether it is a blowout or tight game, keep your concentration. If you feel yourself becoming distracted, focus on specific mechanics during a game. By telling yourself you need to improve a specific part of your game, it will help you to avoid being distracted.

9. Know everyone is ready.

After an interval or interruption, ensure that your colleague (including the scorers) and both sets of players are ready before calling Play. There does not need to be any extended communication, just eye contact, a nod of the head or a thumbs-up so that you know everyone is ready to go.

10. Offer latitude at times.

When a player complains, ask yourself if you got the call right. If you think the call was questionable, give the player some latitude. Do not allow him or her to interfere with your concentration but lend an ear. When you feel you got the call correct, your limit on what you will hear goes down. Most importantly, do not be afraid to end a conversation. Such unofficial warnings can prevent situations from escalating further.

11. Be a great dead-ball official.

It is amazing how a game that progressed smoothly and without incident can go downhill if officials miss something that happens away from the play, after the ball is dead or between overs. Dead-ball officiating is one of the factors that separates average officials from great ones. Problems occur even when the ball is not live.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Fifteen Ways to Improve Your Game

12. Get the game moving again.

When the game is stopped because of a decision — one that results in controversy — the best way to turn down the heat is to get play started again as soon as possible. If the coaches, players, and fans have something else to watch or think about, they will turn their attention to the play and will not have as much time to bark about the last one. If a complicated Law is involved and you need to explain things to a captain, do it. And do not resume the action if it puts a colleague at a disadvantage. But you will often find that the noise will dissipate as play develops.

13. Set the pace.

Lead the way in getting things moving again after intervals and interruptions — e.g., drinks or rain breaks. You can help set the pace by being first back and in place to start, encourage teams to return to the field after breaks and you should always be ready to resume play when the players are.

14. Stretch and rehydrate.

The postgame stretching is just as important — maybe more important — than before the game. Stretching helps warm muscles retain their elasticity and can prevent cramping. And do not forget your fluid intake. You must replace what you lost by drinking water or sports drinks.

15. Become the Laws/Regulations Guru.

Every association has that individual who is known as the rules guy or girl. He or she is well-versed in the Laws and playing regulations and is the go-to person in meetings and on the field. That individual is respected and for good reason. Make it your goal this season (and write it down) to be the most educated official in your area.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Ways to Avoid Negative Attention

Want to keep your officiating career on track? Here are a few things to avoid.

There are volumes on the “do’s” for landing the next big game and breaking into the next level. However, equally important to furthering an officiating career is avoiding the “don’ts” — the things that draw negative attention to ourselves and make it harder for people to support your progression.

Some things obviously go without saying, punching a player, complaining to the tea ladies about the standard of the food, turning up hungover from the night before.

But let us examine the laundry list of dumb decisions that some of our brethren routinely pull — even if they do not realize it. They embarrass/annoy/upset off our appointers and others to the point of making themselves unusable. If you do not want to spend more time doing less as an official, here are some things you should not be doing.

1. Do not dump appointments.

OK, everybody now and then has a work commitment come up on short notice. Hey, sometimes your grandmother dies — but three times? The best appointers know enough to hedge against the unexpected and keep a small stable of super subs, but you don’t want to test their patience and get them writing your name in pencil. Honour your commitments or find another job.

2. Do not double-book yourself.

Yes, it can happen but when “disorganization” becomes a pattern, your prospects for progression are not good.

If you have committed to one fixture do not take the second one that comes along because it is the “better game”

3. Do not make a liar out of Werner Heisenberg.

The German Physicist’s Uncertainty Principle is that there is a limit to knowing two related positions of a particle at the same time. How, then, do you drop one game because you need root canal work but get caught in the beer queue at another game at the same time? It is much, much easier to keep the truth straight than lies. If the demands of keeping up your officiating commitments does not tally with your social life, stop kidding yourself and other people. Choose one or the other.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Ways to Avoid Negative Attention

4. Commit to each game no matter what the level.

Do not try to get away with the scruffy old coat for the U13s because you need to clean, new one for the Division 1 game on Saturday and don't think you can get away with a cursory scan of the competition regulations because It is only those U13's again.

5. Do not be a Prima Donna.

Be humble and empathize a bit.

If your pattern of behaviours becomes being a pain in the rear about your definition of "principles" or "the way the game should be played" either you are wrong for the league or the league's wrong for you — and it will only play out one way.

6. Do not undermine your fellow officials.

Too many officials seem to have concluded that criticizing another official is protected speech on social media for which they cannot be held accountable. Maybe it is "free" — from the perspective that you can't go to jail for it — but It is very costly if you think it will help your career.

Let us see: It brings your objectivity into question; it antagonizes prospective partners; it makes your Appointer question your motives, and it erases any chance you will have for the benefit of the doubt, should you ever need it.

Here is a rule of thumb: If HR might get involved if you said the same thing at work that you just wrote about another official on Facebook, you probably should not have written it. The officiating community has a way of dealing with bad apples.

7. Do not be a high maintenance partner.

An officiating appointment should be something you look forward to for the game itself, the events surrounding it and the officials with whom you work. Your colleagues should be thinking the same thing!

A partnership can function well together without necessarily even liking each other if they can keep their focus on the prime objective.

Make no mistake, however, if you are the type of colleague who develops a reputation, for whatever reason, of grating on others, you will find your opportunities and appointments starting to dwindle.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official

Eight Ways to Avoid Negative Attention

8. Do not suck. (This does come from an American website!)

We can look at most of the previous items on this list as “qualifiers” (or not) to work games. Generally, if you have only limited symptoms of some of the diseases covered, they might be tolerated if you show an ability cut the mustard once over the boundary rope.

That being the case, there is no more sure-fire way to ruin a career than by becoming a certified liability.

To achieve that, try these time-tested behaviours:

- Do not work at the Laws/Regulations.
- Set aside sanctioned mechanics/signals etc. in favour of your own.
- Do not keep up your conditioning.
- Be a distraction.
- Let the teams get to you.
- Let the fans get to you.
- Let your significant other get to you.
- Let your pride get to you.
- Do not attend courses or meetings because you “will not learn anything.”
- Consider your own perspective to be sacrosanct.
- Consider yourself to be better than others.
- Believe it is more important to promote yourself than to serve the game.

Every event in your officiating career is an experience — whether it is a positive one or negative is up to you. You start heading down the road to ruin when you make too many experiences negative for you, your colleagues, your appointer.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Eight Ways to Avoid Negative Attention

Most officials who fail in some sense, have a false and sad sense of entitlement when it comes right down to it. They burn out because the combination of their intellect, athleticism, character and personality is not suited to the level they are trying to work — and they do not deal with it well. That can happen at any level. Whatever the case, if you are driven by the notion, “It cannot be me,” it tends to lead to behaviours mentioned above, alienating you from all your potential benefactors.

Becoming a better official and thereby improving appointments is a process that takes time to complete and can only be escalated so much. You may not have the tools to reach the level you desire, but you certainly have the ability to make it worse for yourself through poor motives, poor choices and poor actions.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six C's that Will get You Straight A's

These are six qualities that raise the level of your officiating. If you are a mnemonics fan, sorry, there is not one to help you. But if you are into alliteration, you are in luck. They all start with the letter C.

1. Confidence

To have any chance to be good at most anything, you need to have self-assurance, and officiating is no different. A lot of officials come from the ranks of former players, so they understand their game and they're used to being out on the field. But participating as an official is a whole different ballgame.

Confidence is not the same as arrogance. An arrogant official will rub everyone — coaches, players, and fellow officials — the wrong way in a hurry. The right kind of confidence comes with game experience and utilizing knowledge gleaned from hours of studying Laws, Regulations and fieldcraft techniques.

New officials will not necessarily have confidence, and if they do have some, it is likely to be dampened if their first games are difficult and they feel unsupported. A mentoring program can help instil confidence in newer officials. An association should assign one new official wherever possible.

2. Composure

Mastering self-control is right up there with gaining confidence, for new officials in particular. Not everyone is prepared for the disparagement, condemnation and indignity that officials might have to face and respond to with aplomb.

It is a natural reaction to “hit back” when you are being attacked. Experienced officials know about the need for composure. That means no shouting down with coaches, players and fans and keeping your wits about you when everyone else is up in arms.

Learning how to deal with different personalities is important. How do you deal with Player A, who has an explosive personality, versus Player B, who has a “buddy” personality? One of the biggest ones is how do you adjust to different colleagues?

Going into games with an “all for one” attitude and supporting each other can get you over some speed bumps. Experience is a great teacher. And sharing information with other officials can help.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six C's that Will get You Straight A's

3. Concentration

The ability to block out outside influences comes with time. Goodness knows there are plenty of things at a sporting event that can divert your attention. Everything from drunken spectators to smells from the barbeque to the noise from the music festival next door can serve as a distraction if you let it.

If you can stay focused on your game while blocking out the noises and sights that used to turn your head as a player or spectator, you have got half the battle won. At least you are looking in the right area. Whether you can make correct judgments based on what you see might be another story.

4. Communication

Hand in hand with learning to concentrate is learning to communicate effectively with your colleagues. Maintaining eye contact with a colleague or having a quick conference are keys to in-game management.

Communication between officials is vital. Let your partner know when you need help. Have a strong pre-game and talk about how you will communicate and over what.

If you are using radios to the scorers make sure you have a firmly established protocol as to how and when they will be used

5. Cohesion

Give-and-take communication, whether It is on the field, during association meetings or just anytime, anywhere, leads to a sense of fellowship. It is esprit de corps among officials.

Joining an association has multiple benefits. One of them is letting others in the officiating community get to know you so they can help promote you. That is especially important if you are a newer official or new to the area. Appointers may be reluctant to take a chance on new people because they have not seen them at work. Once you break through that ceiling, people tend to accept you as an official, your credit improves, and people start to seek you.

Joining an association also helps officials get regular appointments and sometimes find a regular partner. It also gives you a group of peers to bounce questions off and trade games with should an emergency arise that prevents you from working an appointed game.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Six C's that Will get You Straight A's

6. Commitment

The last and most important part of being a successful official is having a commitment to officiating — a commitment to getting better and a commitment to excellence. Officials committed to the job never stop trying to learn.

Being proficient with Laws and regulations can prevent a lot of problems before they happen. But there is more to commitment than that.

There is another side of commitment newer officials, or those looking to move up the ladder, tend to overlook — time and financial demands.

You need the proper uniform, including different coloured kit for different types of games. There are fees to pay to associations and DBS clearance documents to sort out. Educational materials such as Law books and manuals (Tom Smith's) might be purchased. In some leagues, course attendance is mandatory to be eligible for appointments. Those who hope to improve their skills or advance will attend courses and meetings voluntarily.

Then there is the time commitment. There will be pre-season league meetings, training sessions, support/mentor groups and the aforementioned courses. And oh, yes — however much time you want to dedicate to actually working games.

So, there they are. Not an A to Z guide to success, but mind your P's and Q's (and C's) and you'll B the best official you can B.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Potential Regrets from Your Officiating Career or

Je Ne Regrette Rien – I have no regrets over my officiating.

Sometimes you can do everything in your power to get a call right and still blow it. That is a tough regret to live with, but it is even tougher to live with the regrets that you could have avoided. You can do things while the action unfolds in front of you so you have no officiating regrets and you can do things away from the game for your career that will have you looking in life's rear-view mirror a lot less.

Be aware, put yourself in position and be prepared, not just to make the right call in a game, but to make the right career moves. Let's take a look at how you can avoid some of the most common regrets from officials.

1. I Regret ... Not Taking Care of Personalities

Officiating requires dealing with difficult people who are often at their worst, especially under the stress of a close contest. Letting their behaviour get to you personally can take you away from the game and affect your performance, but ignoring it brings its own issues. There is a delicate balance to keeping control of the game and yourself but, like it or not, sometimes you have to face it head-on.

You may tell yourself that the hot-headed, foul-mouthed player with the explosive personality disorder is just blowing off steam. You may reason that addressing the situation will only escalate the disruption. You could be rationalizing your way out of a situation that you should address.

When a player is getting vocal it takes away your concentration. You wind up babysitting him or her instead of paying attention to what's happening in play and your concentration is not on the ball."

If a player breaks your concentration, you need to deal with it.

It is not about your ego or punishment for the obnoxious player; it is about addressing a factor that is interfering with your ability to manage the game. Take the personalities out of it and keep it simple. It is about doing your job.

Despite what many players may think, officials are flesh and blood. Each individual has a different level of tolerance. For some, the gnawing relentless "banter" from the fielders blends into the white noise of the contest. For others, it becomes a thorn in the side of focused attention.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Potential Regrets from Your Officiating Career

Knowing you are not the only official in the world is important, too. Keep in my mind that if you don't take care of business you might be leaving a mess for another official to clean up later in the season. You may know the personality of a player and the things he or she says may not offend you but you still have to address it because if what he or she is saying is inappropriate and he or she says it to another official, later on, it is going to cause a problem.

Taking care of the situation and dealing with poor behaviour so that the game can progress naturally does not mean escalating the situation. Be direct, assertive and responsible without throwing petrol on the player's fire. Check your own ego at the boundary rope and rely on your confidence and experience to deal with the situation.

The first time you hear something out of line you might look toward the captain with a bit of a frown/quizzical look. The second time you might have a word with your colleague to check they heard it and also to give the players an indication you don't want to hear any more. If they don't take the hint then the third time they do something it means time for an official intervention.

Your job is to be a calming influence and if you escalate things you will really regret that. It makes you look bad as an official

Walking the thin line of addressing the situation without escalating it is as much art as it is science. A fair number of social skills, body language and a few choice words can get the job done and it is an easier strategy than taking on an ego-driven player wanting to go head-to-head.

Keep your mind clear, leave personalities out of the situation and deal with what's in front of you before it becomes an unmanageable problem that you wish you had taken care of earlier.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Potential Regrets from Your Officiating Career

2. I Regret ... Not Making the Big Call

A good official knows the game is about the contest and the participants. By nature, officiating is not about garnering attention.

Many like to say something along the lines of, “When you do your job well, you are invisible to everyone.” But that sentiment can get in the way of optimal performance. The Laws and games often call for difficult and unpopular calls at crucial times. Those attention-drawing calls have to be made, but sometimes an official will not make them because he or she wants to stay in the background. That is a mistake and one that can linger.

The big call in the big moment is why you are there. It is the point where all your training and study comes to a head. You don’t want to let the excitement of the moment influence you. When you know a game is on the line, you want to be sure that you are in position and in the right place so try to slow the game down in your mind. At that point, you just rely on muscle memory to make the right moves and the right call. A lot of times you will not realize how big the call was until after the game.

Keep in mind the players are responsible for their actions. Officials are there to enforce the Laws and manage the contest. It is up to you to assess what you see and take any necessary action. It is not your fault or responsibility when a player screws up at a crucial time.

Sometimes you can carry the burden of the situation rather than examining the facts. You are there to make the decision and to uphold the Laws. It is not your job to think of the circumstances around it.

Avoid feeling responsible for how the contest will ultimately be decided. Make the calls you need to make based on what the players do while in front of you. Let the chips fall where they may and go to your next appointment without regret.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Potential Regrets from Your Officiating Career

3. I Regret ... Failing to Write the Report

A good part of any profession, in or out of officiating, is taken up with what can seem to be an excruciating amount of minutiae and often paperwork. It is a necessary evil.

Adopt that type of attitude and don't expect to get a lot of appointments. The reporting requirements to leagues and competitions are there for a reason. You may get all the decisions right on the field, but you'll live to regret not taking care of business after calling Time

Not doing reports correctly can hurt your reputation with appointers and leagues. Basically, It is part of the job and a requirement. They are appointing you for your services and not doing them puts a strain on the administrators who are usually unpaid volunteers.

Social Media is used to criticize officials, opponents, pitches – even the teas, so league administrators can be aided by backup documentation to support decisions that wind up under the microscope. The league should be looking to support you and cover themselves because their reputations are on the line as well. Information is power and organized documentation can help you, your league and your organization come out with your respect intact.

Getting your reports done correctly and on time is not glamorous, but it is important. Don't editorialize, treat your writing like It is a court case and get the facts. Leave your emotions out.

Attention to detail is vital. It will help for down the road when the situation is called into question.

Write down facts that will be hard to remember later on at the time of the incident, note the time/overs/players involved and exactly what was said – word for word, the important circumstances that will go into a full report."

Report writing can be tedious and is not glamorous, but we know the devil is in the details. If you want to avoid your own private hell get the reports done on time and in order. It will save you headaches down the road. Stick to the facts and even just bullet point the report – it does not have to be a literary masterpiece and certainly not War and Peace!



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Potential Regrets from Your Officiating Career

4. I Regret ... Not Taking Care of My Appearance

You probably didn't get into officiating because you liked the uniform. You love the game and you want to be close to it. You care about getting the Laws right, staying in position and keeping the contest fair. You have no interest in walking down a fashion show catwalk, so why focus on appearance?

People tend to form an impression of you in the first seven to 10 seconds of meeting you/seeing you. You can be the greatest official in the world, but if they have already made up their minds about you because of the way you look, you are fighting an uphill battle. Hence try to do everything you can to look your best.

This may seem superficial, but much of your responsibility hinges on the intangibles of things like respect, leadership and confidence. A clean and tidy uniform gives off the message you want conveyed. Keep it simple and give yourself an advantage that is easily in your control.

Half the battle can be won by looking the part, if you are at your best appearance-wise you'll look like an official who knows what he or she is doing. Give yourself that advantage.

5. I Regret ... Not Taking the Extra Career Step

It is common for officials to feel like their careers have grown stagnant. If you've been stuck at the same level, doing the same games in the same league for years and you want to break out, you have to ask yourself: Am I doing everything I can to advance?

You can build your career, or you can choose to not take those steps because of the money, the travel, or the inconvenience. Make the latter choice and you'll live with the regret.

One of the simplest ways to open doors is to attend training and meetings. Simply put, if people don't know your name and who you are, you simply are not going to get games.

Part of the formula is honing your game skills and staying on top of Law and Regulation changes but networking and face-to-face contact is just as important as any education. That is not about manipulative do-anything-to-get ahead salesmanship. It is about making connections, developing camaraderie and letting the local association know who you are.

This can be important career-wise and it is important on a personal level. Many of the training sessions or pre-season meetings have a real reunion feel to them and you get a chance to meet and speak to people you see only a handful of times a year. It also translates into better performance because you develop relationships with people who you will wind up working with on the field."



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Potential Regrets from Your Officiating Career

The fact of the matter is that people have to know who you are to assign you. Word of mouth is not efficient and it is only natural for those doing the assigning to go with officials they are familiar with. Instead of getting resentful of those who seem to have an “in” you can take the necessary steps to make yourself known.

If you are an excellent official and no one knows you — and we are not talking about an old boy network — you are not going to be noticed. Appointments Officers have to be able to put a face to a name.

You could make the next step in your career. It might mean joining a new league and traveling a bit more. That may take some cash out of your pocket, some time off from work and more time away from the family, but the rewards are likely to mean a step up in your officiating career.

Failing to make the move to put yourself into that position will certainly be a tough regret to live with.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Effective Communication Methods to Improve Perception of Your Skills

Officiating team sports is complex and challenging. It involves effective positioning based on appropriate fitness, knowledge of the game, accurate perceptual judgment skills, leading to a clear picture of events (and at times potential future events), and clear knowledge and understanding of the laws or rules of the game to make accurate decisions in the context of the game.

We hear often that effective management and communication are also essential. Officials need skills to apply and sell decisions in ways that are well received by the players. How much do we know about officiating communication? Are some styles and approaches more effective than others? Can we adapt our own approaches, or should we just be ourselves?

In a study with a group of international rugby union referees, one of them stated, “Effective officiating is about developing your relationship with the game. This involves clarity of decision making and communication with the participants.”

A good decision can be ruined by a bad explanation.

Most of the hundreds of research studies of sports officiating have focused on the decision-making component of officiating and only a handful have directly explored communication and management.

In many sports and contexts, it can be argued that the quality of a referee’s communication is as important, if not more important, than the quality of the decision itself. A good decision can be communicated badly and create perceptions of unfairness or uncertainty, yet a difficult or questionable decision that is communicated effectively can be well accepted by players.

Players say that they want officials to be consistent, competent, dependable and respectful if they are to be perceived as fair and equitable.

So, what are the skills, qualities and characteristics required to be an effective officiating communicator?

The results of a survey across a wide range of sports officiating development managers revealed five clear and inter-related themes:



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Effective Communication Methods to Improve Perception of Your Skills

1. Personal Qualities

First and foremost, officials need to be personable. What players think about your decisions is largely influenced by what they think about you. It is best to avoid being overly friendly, but if you present qualities and characteristics that the players like, they are likely to be much more receptive to you and your decisions. If you are over-authoritative as an official, you are unlikely to be able to get the players on your side. Top officials have an awareness of how their personality influences their officiating. That allows them to adapt their style in accordance with the requirements of the game situation — like a sort of emotional intelligence that allows them to relate to players effectively. This self-awareness is crucial, and although the characteristics can be seen to be a part of the individual referee's personality, it is the control of these, with purpose and restraint, that make for effective officiating. As such, personality should not be thought of as a fixed state, but something officials can develop.

2. The best communicators are respectful and approachable.

Many of the personal qualities that officiating managers identified matched the qualities that players want to see in sports officials. They suggested the best communicators are respectful and approachable. They're the sort of individuals who will actively seek out the coaches and captains before a game to ask how their season's going to begin to develop some rapport. Similarly, resilience and dependability were identified as key characteristics. Top referees are decisive and do not cave to the pressures of players and the crowd but stand firm behind their decisions. They also show accountability. This requires officials to be honest and admit when they've made a mistake. Crucially, it also means being able to provide a rationale for the decision that you've just made. Too often inexperienced officials ignore players who inquire about their decisions instead of simply providing their reasoning, which can prevent problems from escalating.

To make it to the top, the officiating managers identified that you need to be willing to interact with players and develop relationships to effectively manage the game. Players want officials to be decisive and resistant to pressures from other players and able to deliver decisions in a confident and calm manner. One referee manager suggested, "We talk about 'presence.' That includes being cooperative and professional, as opposed to overly familiar or over officious."



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Effective Communication Methods to Improve Perception of Your Skills

3. One-way Communication

We can all see that we need to effectively sell our decisions. As such, self-presentation skills are crucial. We need to manage the impression that we portray to others in our speech and our non-verbal communication. Communication begins in the way you actually make your signals, the impression you are making and confidence with which you do that. Similarly, how clear you are to both players and coaches, and the confidence with which you actually hold yourself when you are doing this. The actual words are really only the last aspect.

Your language should be clear, accurate and concise. Officials who are overly wordy can reflect uncertainty, so our choice of words needs to be considered. Our tone should also be neutral so that we don't demean players and speak down to them like a parent might to a child as this could cause resentment. Instead, we should talk like an adult would to an adult, to encourage positive interactions. The VAPER model (volume, articulation, pitch, emphasis and rate) may be a useful way of examining our verbal interactions. Our volume should be loud and clear but without shouting when we are delivering messages to everyone. We should articulate our words clearly and a lower pitch will reflect confidence. You may choose to emphasize keywords and our rate should be slow and consistent. Often, we find that all these VAPER factors increase when we are under pressure, creating the impression that we are losing control.

Non-verbally the key factors are establishing eye contact, using positive expressions in the face, keeping the head neutral or upright and our posture should be strong, holding ourselves tall to project confidence. We should not overuse our hands, as excessive hand gestures portray uncertainty and trying to establish control. We should not point but when needed and address players with an open hand. Finally, our movement should be slow and controlled and we should hold our ground when under pressure.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Effective Communication Methods to Improve Perception of Your Skills

4. Situation Monitoring

As we progress as officials, we will come across a wide variety of game and player situations. There will be times when the intensity of the game rises and perhaps players start to become frustrated. Recognizing this is the starting point and taking measures to prevent situations from escalating is crucial. Reading and understanding people's faces and expressions and being good at dealing with changes in others' body language is a skill that can be learned and practiced.

Also, it is about developing an understanding from the players' point of view about what they might be going through at the time. Sometimes it is not always black and white. There might be something that has been building up for 10 or 15 minutes.

It is also about interpreting players' feelings. You need to recognize when someone is angry, recognize when someone has done something out of frustration, as opposed to some intentional act, someone who is on a bit of a downer because they aren't playing well, not that that is your problem as an umpire at the end of the day, but you have to recognize those things and how to then communicate.

So, the officiating managers recognize the need for officials to read and accurately judge less obvious aspects of the game, in order to interact successfully with the players.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Effective Communication Methods to Improve Perception of Your Skills

5. Skilled Interaction

Individuals are more likely to perceive procedures as being fair when they are given the opportunity to express their feelings. Skilled interactors allow this to take place, giving the players a voice, whether or not they will act upon the comments. As one officiating manager describes, “A good way to defuse a situation where the player might be getting a bit aggressive is a gentle smile, and a bit of ‘I understand’ attitude. That can go a long way and just being able to understand how to adjust your body language to deal with those different situations.” Similarly, another said, “While the umpire is not out there to win friends, it is important to engage with those players and build respect. For too long we just expected that you would get respect. Now you have to earn it. It is a two-way street. It is an important tool to keep them on your side, because ... they are more likely to understand if something does go wrong.” As it undoubtedly will at some stage.

On the other side of things, when umpires interact in a poor way with the players that are frustrating them, then tension and animosity between the two teams builds up, and the umpire can be clueless to this actually taking place. All of a sudden it ends up in an incident and that had nothing to do with whether or not the umpire was technically correct. An official’s ability to adapt his or her interaction style during games and avoid rigid approaches to dealing with conflict was seen by officiating managers as a mark of skilled officiating communication.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Part 5.

Mentoring





South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Five Quick Mentoring Tips

There may be no more important role in officiating than that of a mentor. If the next generation of officials is to become proficient and to maintain the traditions of good officiating, the newer officials must get the proper guidance.

In order to be a helpful mentor, there are some “must-dos.” Here are five of them.

1. Consider personalities.

Before offering your mentorship, make sure you will mesh. If you were a hothead when you started, you can address those experiences. If you were shy and unsure, you might have more in common with a new official with that same temperament.

2. Don't misrepresent yourself.

Remember that even though you are more experienced, you aren't necessarily an expert. Don't be afraid to admit you've made mistakes. Use them as teaching points. And while your career may have had plenty of highlights, babbling on about them is not mentoring; it is bragging.

3. Don't hold back.

If you withhold information thinking that passing on the tricks of the trade will result in the mentee getting more or better games than you, you shouldn't be a mentor.

4. Make time.

Unless you are willing to put in the necessary time and energy, there will be problems. Some mentors find it is helpful to work a game with the newer official. If you can multi-task without compromising your own officiating, taking the newer official on-field with you is a great way to mentor.

5. Be available.

Set up regular meeting times and discuss ways to improve. Set dates to attend games the newer official works and set aside time for a comprehensive postgame discussion. In-person meetings are preferable but not required. Let the newer official know that you'd welcome a phone call or email with any questions or concerns.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Nine Characteristics of a Good Mentor

1. Adaptability

Times have officially changed. Technology has become an important educational tool in all sports at all levels. Whether It is using an app in your pre-game, setting up an online study group or clipping and sharing game video, mentors have the ability to change with the times. They look for ways to incorporate technology and use it to their advantage. As games change, so do rules, mechanics and philosophies that go along with them. Mentors stay on top of those changes (and at times even influence the change). My own mentor always says, “If you aren’t keeping up, you’ll constantly be catching up.”

2. Approachability

A mentee has to feel comfortable talking to his or her mentor. A mentoring relationship is not just about the business, It is personal. Mentors build trust early on in order to establish confidence in the relationship. They know that they need to initiate a conversation that makes a potential mentee feel comfortable. Sometimes It is as simple as recognizing and reaching out to officials who have recently been added to a league they work to say, “Congratulations,” or, “I’m here for you!”

3. Availability

Mentors pick up their phones and return text messages and emails. They may not always have the time to talk the moment they are contacted, but they always make time sooner rather than later. It is important for those they mentor not to feel like a nuisance. Mentors make the effort to foster the relationship.

4. Communication

Mentors know how to manage the uncomfortable conversations that will inevitably take place. They may need to tell an official to lose weight or that they messed up a rule. Mentors handle those situations with a tough-love approach. They are honest, fair and always keep the best interest of the ones they mentor at the forefront of their interactions with them.

5. Character

Mentors are good people. They carry themselves in a way that makes others excited to work with them. They tend to be like O negative blood, which works well with everyone. They do not engage in gossip. Mentors have a way of putting the best face on even the toughest situations.



South Central Region ECB ACO

Inside the Mind of the Official



Nine Characteristics of a Good Mentor

6. Consistency

The best mentors are “do as I do” kind of people. They practice what they preach and believe in what they are doing. Their actions are a direct reflection of the lessons they teach. If a mentor tells a mentee to update his or her availability daily, the mentor is constantly making sure his or her own is up to date.

7. Credibility

Mentors are able to help others achieve their goals because they have experienced successes of their own. They’ve put in the time to master their craft and have somewhat of a resume to show for it. That doesn’t mean that mentors have to be at the end of their careers. However, the more games, tournaments and experiences they have, the more knowledge they have to pass down.

8. Humility

Former NFL coach Tony Dungy said it so eloquently in his book, *The Mentor Leader*. Dungy wrote, “If you do it right — if you really mentor others — more often than not, people will notice what a remarkably talented team, staff or child you have rather than what a great coach, employer or parent you are.” Mentors aren’t in it for the glory. They don’t make it about themselves. They find deep satisfaction in helping others succeed.

9. Positivity

A true mentor makes a positive impact in the lives of those they mentor. They have an uplifting attitude. When mentees are dealing with tough situations, a mentor puts a positive spin on it rather than engage in talk that brings themselves or others down. A mentor’s job is to help develop the next generation — of great officials as well as great mentors, too. Mentors know they may very well end up working a game or two with their mentee. If they have helped their mentee and given them keys for success, they know that their game is going to go a lot more smoothly. Their example keeps the game on a positive trajectory and ultimately creates the mentors of tomorrow. Are you up to the challenge?