

# Refereeing At the Grass Roots



## MENTAL ATTITUDE AND ALERTNESS

It is not easy to assess your mental aptitude and temperament for refereeing, but it will be helpful to describe some of the qualities required. As a referee, you must never cease to be alert and above all, be watchful and aware of the changing situations in the game and of the players in relation to each other.

You must learn to distinguish between fair and unfair play and remain totally impartial, keeping a cool head and refusing to be caught up in the emotion of the game. You must not let your judgement be swayed by appeals from player - indeed your whole attitude and bearing must show that you are confident of your ability to control the game. This does not mean that you should be over-demonstrative or show off, but it does mean that you should, when necessary, be able to assert yourself.

Gradually you will develop your own personality as a referee. Experience will teach you how to interpret the laws and, provided you are alert, fair and firm in how you apply them, you will earn the respect of the players in a natural manner. Many games will run smoothly and decisions will be easy to make, but others will throw up awkward situations and you will be judged by the way you deal with them. Try not to be hesitant in giving a decision, for nothing is more likely to make the players doubtful of your ability.

You will find that most players will accept your decisions, right or wrong, and will respond to advice or warning given in a firm but friendly manner. No players should be allowed to get away with any deliberate infringement – otherwise, the remainder will sense the injustice and feel that you are weak in your handling of the game.



In junior games you will rarely have the help of assistant referees, who are qualified referees themselves and, therefore, you must be prepared to make decisions yourself. Less skilful players tend to rely on effort and enthusiasm and sometimes they will hopelessly misjudge a challenge on an opponent. When this happens, you have to consider factors such as carelessness and the amount of force used. Of course, you must punish such unfair challenges with a direct free kick (or penalty kick if the player is in his/her own penalty area when making the unfair challenge), but it is only necessary

to take further action, such as a caution or a sending off, if his/her actions are severe. Be careful not to magnify the situation but, on the other hand, never be afraid to act firmly within the laws. There is all the difference between mistimed effort and deliberate foul play and you must show by your decision that you recognise the difference.

On and off the field referees should conduct themselves with a quiet dignity and firmness. You are well advised to keep apart from players and officials as far as possible, this doesn't mean that you should appear unfriendly. It does mean that you should avoid arguments about the justness of your decisions, or post-mortems in the dressing room after the match, even when you are certain that you have made no mistakes. Throughout you must remain unobtrusive but an effective master of the situation, whether it is a straightforward occasion for awarding a free-kick or some unprecedented happening for which no rule, however far-seeing, could provide. Such happenings may come only once in your experience, but by your understanding of the spirit of the Laws of the Game, you should be able to arrive at a sensible and satisfactory solution.

***Confidence in yourself will carry you through the worst of situations and, more important, it will make officials and players have confidence in you.***

**(With thanks to The Football Association, “Advice for Newly Qualified Referees”)**

If you have any questions, comments or feedback about this document, or anything involving the Referee Centre, please send an email to: [sdenoncourt@soccercan.ca](mailto:sdenoncourt@soccercan.ca)

