

## Managing the Flow

One of the hardest things for officials to learn is that a referee does not have to blow their whistle all the time to be in control of a game. Control comes from self-confidence: an attitude that good referee's project the moment they step onto the field of play.

Having given the signal to start, the official's main objective then becomes one of allowing the game to flow fairly by maintaining control throughout the game. To achieve this, the official will need to exercise full communication and player-management skills with accurate interpretation and consistent application of the rules of the game.

When combining these communication and player management requirements, players will expect a level of consistency in both decision making and subsequent disciplinary actions taken by the referee. This is understandable, as a frequent bone of contention regarding an official's performance relates to consistency, or more often than not, inconsistency of decisions made and actions taken.

### Penalisation of Offences

If an official is to achieve consistency they need to be able to instantly recognise unfair play and interpret and accurately judge penal and technical offences, and the severity of such challenges.

The way an official chooses to deal with an offence, determines that they should deal with future similar offences in a similar manner. That is apart from situations where a 'quiet word' to the offender is enough, without fear of retaliation by the offending player or their team mates.

### Persistent Infringement

The need to be alert to persistent infringements cannot be over emphasised. The offences may be petty but the official needs to caution the guilty player if they persistently infringe the rules of the game. It is not possible to define persistently in terms of actual number of fouls committed but when an offender commits three or four penal offences in close succession, disciplinary action must be considered.

To monitor persistent offenders, the official will need to concentrate and memorise the offender probably by making a mental note of their shirt number or a personal characteristic that will aid accurate recall.

### The Advantage Clause

For the sake of consistency, the advantage clause should only be applied where circumstances permit and without sacrificing the match control element. If acts of unfair play are considered to be serious enough to warrant an instant stoppage in the game with the award of a penalty, then so be it.

Some schools of thought advocate the strong disciplinarian approach to unfair play during the first 5-10 minutes of the game: letting nothing go, lecturing players and even issuing cautions in order to establish control. Then having established control the official can significantly relax the control and liberally apply the advantage clause.

Such an approach can be seen as an inconsistency. However, in the case of contact fouls, if the official reads the players intentions and actions correctly, there is no reason why the application of advantage should not be encouraged during the early stages of the game.

## **Fitness and Movement**

The ability to move quickly and fluently around the field of play to achieve clear viewing angles of committed offences and possible confrontational situations is an important ingredient in achieving consistency. The closer the official is to an incident the more likely their decision is to go unquestioned. For example, a decision given from 5–10 metres will be more readily accepted than one given from 30 metres or more, even though it may be the correct decision.

With this in mind, it is extremely important for the official to try to be on the scene and to appreciate the problems that may occur if he/she is not there. Remember, the further away from an incident the less credibility the decision will have, and the less effective the match control.

Lack of fitness will restrict ease of movement and sacrifice good positioning. It is an essential requirement for the official to work on their level of fitness to develop stamina and quick to achieve ideal viewing angles close to the active play.

Check out the Physical Fitness resources on this site for further information.