

The Officiating Team

The effectiveness of the officiating team depends on all members understanding their responsibilities, tasks, and duties. Each official must rely on other members of the team to perform their duties in a timely, accurate, and responsible manner.

Before the Referee Has Made a Decision

This is the stage when input from the officiating team can be most effective because it can prevent rather than correct issues. There is less damage done to the overall authority of the officiating team if the referee is able to gather as much relevant detail as possible before reaching a decision.

The pre-game discussion must develop an understanding by all members of the team about the importance of making eye contact before a significant decision is made or announced, and the specific signals by which the assistant referees and fourth official can provide relevant information. The referee may need assistance with any of following issues:

- A second caution
- The occurrence of misconduct in addition to a foul
- The level of severity of the misconduct
- The unnoticed involvement of other persons in the foul or misconduct

After the Referee Has Made a Decision but Not Yet Restarted Play

Once a decision has been reached, announced, and perhaps partially implemented, the officiating team may encounter resistance if something different eventually needs to be done. The major responsibility here is to prevent a serious error from occurring.

Accordingly, an assistant referee or fourth official should act only if they have seen some element of the events on the field or court, which they have strong reason to believe **would have resulted in a different decision if it had been seen**. The objective is to “get it right” while there is still time to correct matters. Among the potentially serious errors which the officiating team should prevent are:

- The failure to give a red card following the issuance of a second caution
- The display of a card to the wrong player
- The display of a wrong card to a player
- The failure to punish instigating behaviour in addition to any retaliation
- An action which is contrary to the laws of the game or to local rules of competition
- An incorrect call that a goal or point was scored or not
- Violent conduct has occurred which carries the threat of further serious misconduct.

The pre-game meeting needs to include a discussion on how to gain the referee’s attention, to direct attention to the official who has relevant information, and how to communicate that information as efficiently and unobtrusively as possible. The longer this process takes, the greater the possibility of resistance and eroded authority.

Once Play is Restarted

The only decision which can be corrected once play has restarted is the failure to show a red card following a second caution. However, any of the errors listed above should be brought to the attention of the referee at the earliest opportunity as the information may be used by the referee to recover some authority through player management strategies.

The most likely opportunity is the next stoppage, so the pre-game meeting should include a strategy for communicating at any stoppage, as well as how to gain the referee's attention if important information needs to be provided. The assistant referee or fourth official may decide that, under the circumstances, it may be better to wait for the end of a period of play to discuss any of these matters with the referee.