

Setting Goals Effectively

The way you set goals strongly influences their effectiveness.

Before you start to set goals, prepare the background of the goal setting by:

- understanding your commitment to the sport
- understanding the officiating level you want to reach within the sport
- knowing the skills you will have to gain and the levels of performance needed
- knowing where this fits into your overall life goals.

General Guidelines

The following broad guidelines apply to setting effective goals:

- **Positive Statement:** Express your goals positively. 'To rule correctly and consistently on this part of the game' is a much better goal than 'don't make this stupid mistake'.
- **Be Precise:** When writing a goal for your officiating, note what aspect of your development the goal is referring to. If it is a specific ruling then what is the rule? If it's about position, then how will you know you're in the right place? If it's fitness, write down what level of fitness you expect to have in order to keep up with the players.
- **Set Priorities:** Where you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
- **Write goals down:** This avoids confusion and gives them more impact.
- **Keep goals small:** Keep the goals you are working towards immediately (i.e. in this session) small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Derive today's goals from larger goals.

A number of general principles should be noted about goal setting:

Set Performance, not Outcome Goals

This is *very* important. You should set goals that you have as much control over as possible. There is nothing more dispiriting than failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control, such as poor support from other officials, bad weather, injury, spectator pressure, or just plain bad luck. Goals based on outcomes are vulnerable to things beyond your control.

If you base your goals on personal performance targets or skills you want to acquire, then you can keep control over achieving your goals and draw satisfaction from them. For example, you might consistently rule against one team in the scrum who is using an improper technique, and be judged harshly by that team's coach and supporters.

If you set an outcome goal of ruling against both teams to keep the game close, then this will be a defeat. If you set a performance goal of ruling consistently regardless of whether the ruling favours one team or the other, then you will have achieved the goal and can draw satisfaction and self-confidence from its achievement.

Set Specific Goals

Set specific, measurable goals. If you achieve all conditions of a measurable goal, then you can be confident and comfortable in your achievement. If you consistently fail to meet a measurable goal, then you can adjust it or analyse the reason for failure and take appropriate action to improve your skills.

Set Realistic Goals

Goals may be set unrealistically high for the following reasons:

- **Other people:** Other people (coaches, spectators) can set unrealistic goals for you, based on what they want. Often this will be done in ignorance of your goals.
- **Insufficient information:** If you do not have a clear, realistic understanding of your sport and the techniques and performance to be mastered, it is difficult to set realistic goals.
- **Always expecting your best performance:** Many people base their goals on their best performance, however long ago that was. This ignores the inevitable backsliding that can occur for good reasons, and ignores the factors that led to that best performance. It is better to set goals that raise your average performance and make it more consistent.
- **Lack of respect for self:** If you do not respect your right to rest, relaxation and pleasure in life, then you risk burnout.

Setting Goals Too Low

Alternatively goals can be set too low because of:

- **Fear of failure:** If you are frightened of failure you will not take the risks needed for optimum performance. As you apply goal setting and see the achievement of goals, your self-confidence will increase: helping you to take bigger risks. Know that failure is a positive thing: it shows you areas where you can improve your skills and performance.
- **Taking it too easy:** It is easy to take the reasons for not setting goals unrealistically high as an excuse to set them too low. If you're not prepared to stretch yourself and work hard, then you are unlikely to achieve anything of any real worth.

Setting Goals at the Right Level

Setting goals at the right level is a skill that is gained with practice.

You should set goals so that they are slightly out of reach, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them. No-one will put serious effort into achieving a goal that they believe is unrealistic. Set incremental steps for yourself. A goal one week could be to manage the game so the ball is in play uninterrupted for at least 30 seconds, the next week being a minute and so on. Another goal could be to issue no warnings to any players during a game. The question then becomes what do I have to do before and during the game to make this goal a reality?

Personal factors such as tiredness, injury, stage in the season, etc. should be taken into account when goals are set.

Now try setting some goals, and then measure them against the points above. Adjust them to meet the recommendations and then review them. You should now be able to see the importance of setting goals effectively.