



February 5, 2009

Sierra Valley Soccer Referee Association

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Thank you and Upcoming Events

Thank you for refereeing games the last 2 weekends in Stockton. We got a lot of compliments on the job you did.

Feb.14-15. JJ Minor div.1/3 tournament

March 7-8 – DOL, Kaercher end-of-season tournament

Communication among Referees: Eye Contact

Observations at games the last couple weekends brought out that no matter how good you are, there is a chance that you are missing some things that can make you better. The one that I noticed most frequently had to do with communication among referees. No matter how good you are as a referee, a sure way to boost the quality of your refereeing up a notch is to work better with your fellow officials. The starting point for this is your pre-game meeting. During the match, the simplest and quickest way to get information back and forth among officials is to make eye contact. At every stoppage, all three referees should look at each other. From the perspective of the center referee, here are some solid reasons for doing this:

- 1) If your assistant referee has a signal, you need to get it promptly. You are the final arbiter of what to do. If you are not getting all the information that your ARs are trying to share, it is like a car running without all cylinders firing. If there is a problem on the field, who is most likely to help you? Your AR. If you don't even look at them, how are you going to get that help?
- 2) By glancing at your AR, you can check out a few things on the fly: Are they in position? If not, you might need to work harder in that end of the field to judge offside for yourself. Do they have the flag in the hand closer to you? If not, they might not be polished in other areas, too. Do they make eye contact with you, too? If not, then how can you share information with them, for example, how can you tell them to go to the goal line on a free kick near the penalty area if you think it's necessary? Or how can you signal to them to watch a particular pair of players who have been misbehaving.
- 3) As you look at the AR, you should also scan the field to see how the players are setting up. This may give you insights as to the next play. You may also spot opponents interacting in ways that alert you to potential problems.
- 4) If you don't look at your ARs and they made signals that you are missing, you send them a message by your action that you don't care about their input. You give the appearance of being on an ego trip. How motivated do you think they will be to assist you?
- 5) Coaches sense when center referees ignore their ARs because they miss opportunities to substitute players. You are hampering their ability to coach if you miss the flag for substitution. In a tight match, making a substitution at the right time can be really important to a coach.

When you are making eye contact with your assistant referee teammates, it should last long enough for it to be meaningful. If your head goes back and forth quickly like windshield wipers

not stopping at the end of their sweep, you haven't given the ARs a chance to make eye contact with your eyes. Slow down a bit.

So much for looking at both ARs when the ball is out of play. During dynamic play, ideally you have the ball and one AR in view at just about all times. You accomplish this by running a wide diagonal and when you reverse directions, turn in the direction of your AR. If you run the more-common left diagonal (towards the left corner), then you will always turn to the right. This opens up your body to the majority of players at the same time as it gets you facing your AR.

If you have a tendency to focus on play with tunnel vision and lose sight of your AR, then you need to instill a new habit to take frequent glances at the AR book-ending the play with you.

Here are a few times you can sneak peeks at them:

- 1) Whenever the ball is passed across the half-way line. This is the first time that you might have an offside going in this direction, so you need to check for that information.
- 2) Whenever there is a long forward pass. While the ball is sailing along, there is no play on it so you don't need to watch it. This might be a safe time to sneak a quick look at your AR.
- 3) When a player has a long unopposed run, sneak a peek at your AR.

As an assistant referee, you need to look at both fellow officials at all stoppages, too. Among the reasons are:

- 1) If the center referee missed the substitution flag (or even more important, the signal for a foul or misconduct), you can "mirror" the other AR's flag by giving the same signal.
- 2) If this is a set play, say a corner kick, and you are the AR on the opposite end of the field, as you take a look at the center referee, this should cue you to check out the players between you and the referee. They are out of his/her view, behind his back, so to speak. It is your job to monitor them for fouls and misconducts.
- 3) The center referee may be trying to impart match control information to you silently by subtle gestures. Maybe they want you to watch particular players and they are giving you a pre-arranged signal. Or it might be something simple like a point to the watch, then 3 fingers on the shorts to denote 3 minutes left.
- 4) The center referee may be pleased with a good call that you made and be giving you a thumbs up.

It is one level of officiating to look at both of your assistant referees at routine stoppages, it is an even better referee who looks at both ARs for the non-routine stoppages, such as fouls and misconducts. These occasions may be even more important. If you thought it was a simple foul and they are giving you the signal for a card and you make use of this information, great! If you miss the signal, and the player goes on to create further havoc in the match, not so great.

If you think you are doing a good job refereeing already, think how much better you could be if you get the benefit of two more pairs of eyes. For further information on communication among officials, please see the StocktonYouthSoccer.org web-site referee posting: Officiating Team Communications.