

# 10 Things A New (American) Referee Should Learn and Know:

## 1. THE BIG DOCUMENTS

- The FIFA Laws of the Game,
- The USSF Publication on Mechanics and Procedures
- The USSF Advice to Referee on the Laws of the Game
- The USSF Referee Administrative Handbook

A new referee must know the Laws of the Game. There is no worse feeling than making a mistake because you don't know the laws. The better you know the laws, the more comfortable you will be once you're the person in charge.

Studying the mechanics and procedures will give you a solid foundation for what you will be doing on the field, how it should be done, what it should look like, and how to interact with your teammates. When you work in 3 man teams, knowing this document will give you a very strong foundation from which to build on.

The ATR is a fantastic resource that you can study which will give you answers to nearly any game situations. While you don't need to memorize it (yet) it is a great reference after those tough games.

The Administrative handbook is something every referee should be familiar with. If you have any aspirations as a referee in the future, here's the book that will tell you how to advance. It will tell you what to do if you are ever assaulted. It also contains our code of ethics. If the LAWS govern the sport of soccer, this book governs us as referees.

## 2. Where to buy all the equipment you will need

You will need to get the proper gear to make you look the part. A referee should always have the proper uniform:

- USSF approved shirts
- Black shorts
- Black knee high stockings 3 striped or logo,
- Mostly black footwear

In addition, a referee should also carry:

- WATER
- 2 whistles
- 2 watches w/ digital count down or chronometer
- 2 pencils/pens
- 2 sets of red/yellow cards
- A data wallet w/match cards
- A set of flags
- A wrist lanyard for the whistle

Items that you might find helpful but you don't absolutely need are:

- Sunscreen
- A snack
- A Pre-game check list
- A ball pump w/inflation needle

- A second pair of boots try flats, if your other pair are spiked
- A folding chair
- Some ear plugs (just kidding)

You can find these items in a number of stores and soccer magazines. The "Official" USSF uniforms, however, can only be bought from OFFICIAL SPORTS INTERNATIONAL ([www.officialsports.com](http://www.officialsports.com)) Economy shirts are fine to start.

### 3. How to find and work with a match assigner

Without an assigner, getting games is basically impossible. Contact the instructor who taught your referee class or locate the local referee's association that you should join, if you haven't done so yet. These people will be able to put you in contact with the right assigner. Once you are working with the assigner, make sure you understand what their expectations are for you. If you do a good job and fulfill your commitments you'll start seeing more challenging games. If you don't show for games or you are frequently unavailable then you will probably get what games are left over, if any. So just remember, refs and assigners work together, but the assigner is working for the league or tournament and they must fulfill their needs. Complaining about what games you get is usually frowned upon.

### 4. What to expect and do when you show up to a game before the kick-off

Whether you are showing up to be the center referee or an assistant referee, the first thing you're going to do is meet up with your teammates, unless you're working alone. Once everyone has arrived, the center referee should go over a detailed set of pre-game instructions. These instructions should include subtle communications that the ref would like to use in the game, as well as positioning, mechanics, and other intangible aspects of the game like what players to keep a close eye on. Next, the team (or you, alone) will go about your duties of checking the field for safety and proper markings, also checking in the player's passes and equipment. Then the refs can warm up and stretch and observe the teams to get an idea of who might be the more skilled players. Just prior to kick off, the referee should clear the field and get the captains out for the coin toss and then get on with the match.

### 5. How to correctly perform duties as an assistant referee

Being a referee isn't all about knowing how and when to blow a whistle. Very often, you are going to be required to act as an assistant referee. This might seem boring, but many times you will find that it can be just as challenging, if not more challenging than being in the middle. The mental and physical demands of this job are unique and you're vulnerable to coach or spectator criticism because you can't really get away from them if you stay in your proper position. So, learning the mechanics, procedures, and positioning is very important. If there is a cardinal rule to being an AR it would be stay with the offside lines that is the most important part of your job, getting the offside decision correct is paramount to any other responsibility you have. You also have to be the eyes and ears for the referee when he is on the other end of the field, and if someone needs to be sent-off you need to have the courage to inform the referee of what happened behind their back. Another good thing about taking on AR duties is the opportunity to watch and work with referee's who have more experience than you, this is a very good way to

learn. Often, you will see that before you are asked to be the center referee at a new level, you will first serve as an AR at that level.

#### 6. How to properly position yourself in a game

This is something that really can only be developed with practice and experience. However, studying the mechanics guidelines and watching a lot of games can help. The real goal is to cover as much of the field as you can while interfering with play as little as possible. You will want to make sure you're in a position to see as many players as you can at any one time. You will want to keep in mind that you AR's are there to assist you, so you should stay out of their areas so you can both have a different view on each play. You will also want to be in a position to always easily see your AR's, avoid turning your back to them if possible. Remember, the game keeps moving, so should you. Don't get caught watching play run down the field while you're standing still, admiring them. More importantly, don't become a Center Circle Ref (the guy that stays in the middle all game).

#### 7. How to apply all of your knowledge and skill once you are refereeing a game

After you have learned all of the laws and mechanics, how do you react once you're in the middle? I remember my first game well; I felt awkward and unsure of what I had to do. It was only a U-10 match and there I was feeling like the game was passing me by, it felt SO FAST. I was only 15 at the time, so this was a big challenge for me. Even though I studied hard and knew my stuff, identifying an infringement and then reacting with the whistle in a timely manner was actually difficult. I knew what a foul was according to the book; the problem was that I thought a foul should have been called every 10 seconds. I knew from playing the game that wouldn't be accepted. The trick is getting a feel for what should be called and foul and what is trifling and should be ignored. The more I refereed the better I got at this, but I still feel like I'm learning, every game.

#### 8. The secrets of Man Management and Preventative Refereeing

If someone should have taught me something about refereeing in the entry class it was about effectively managing the game. Being a referee is like being a cop, a psychologist, a friend, and a babysitter all in one. You're primary responsibility is the player's safety and after that I would say it's trying to get 22 players, all the subs, and coaches through the game without them blowing a fuse. There are a lot of different techniques that you can employ to prevent nasty situations from escalating or bad fouls from occurring. Sometimes, a player just needs to vent a little and if he thinks you're listening that may calm him down. Other times, you have to be stern with players to get them to behave properly. Preventing problems before they happen is a key to effective refereeing. Unfortunately, there is no one-way to handle this, everyone develops their own style of refereeing and what works for you may not work for the next ref either. There are books like *For The Good Of The Game* by Robert Evans and Ed Bellion and sites like <http://www.asktheref.com> which can provide many great suggestions on good methods to use when managing emotional players. Also, the USSF has a CD lesson about man management, which is somewhat insightful.

#### 9. How to apply advantage CORRECTLY

Most new referees have trouble getting this correct. The key to advantage is patience, wait to see if an advantage will materialize; if it doesn't in a few moments after the foul, blow the whistle and bring it back. If that player gets an attack going after a foul and a bunch of defenders cut off his run right away, blow the whistle and bring it back. If he gets away from the foul or finds an open teammate on a pass and they move the ball directly into an advantageous area of the field, give the signal and "PLAY ON!" Be mindful of where you are going to give advantage, a team probably doesn't have advantage deep in their own half, call these fouls. One of the common mistakes made with advantage is the tendency to signal and yell, "Play On" when there is not really any advantage. Constantly awarding advantage when there isn't any foul might confuse players and spectators who might think you're ignoring fouls that you should be calling. Instead of using "Play On" to indicate that you aren't going to stop play for a trifling foul, you could try using "Keep Going" or something like that.

## 10. How to write a proper match report

After the match is over, it is your duty to write a match report and submit it to the competition authority. A good match report should include:

- The date of the match
- The league under which the match is being played, age group, and division
- The teams involved
- The location, field conditions, and weather
- The final score (and sometimes who scored)
- All cautions and the 7+7 reason for the caution
- All send-offs and the 7+7 reason, including a brief description of the circumstances leading up to the send off (and send in the player pass with the match report, if required)
- Misconduct reporting should also be sure to include offender name, number, and in some cases the registration number from the player pass
- Note if you have been paid or not, and what you received or are owed
- Note any unusual circumstances or events including if the match has been terminated early or if you have made any critical errors
- It is also very important to list any severe injuries to players as this might be required for the player to get medical coverage via their health care provider

When you write a match report it is better to be detailed, yet concise. Don't leave out important facts but at the same time try not to editorialize and let your emotions do the talking. Writing a good match report can really help the league to determine how to deal with discipline issues and how to handle issues having to do with league standings, among many other things.

-Post game rituals (the unwritten tradition)

Learn the local post game rituals, other refs will respect you for it, and it's a lot of fun. Where I referee it's tradition to go to a pub or restaurant and have a beer or soda and discuss the match. Usually, the guy in the middle buys (because the CR made more money and the AR's probably saved the ref's butt at least once in the match.) In any case refereeing can be a fun social activity after games.