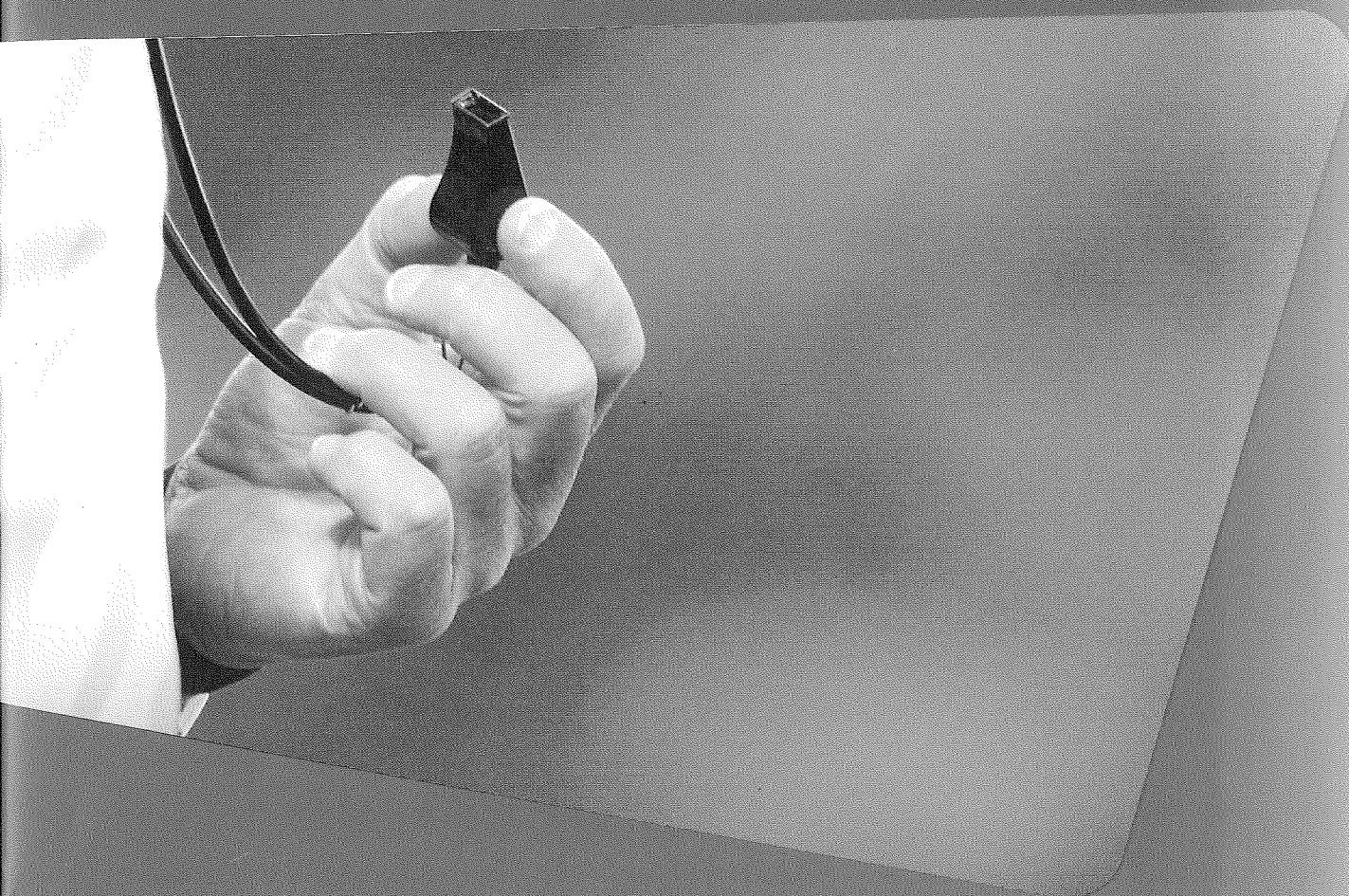


Aroha mai te haakinakina



People Management

A Resource for Sports Officials



THE SPORTS OFFICIALS PROGRAMME
www.hillarysport.org.nz



Contents Page

People Management	4
Part A: Human Relations	5
Part B: Communication Skills	8
Part C: Conflict Management	21
Summary	30
References	31

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Top sports officials are good at dealing with people. Building relationships with the people in your sport will help you to achieve your potential as an official.

Good communication is the key to developing these relationships. Expressing yourself clearly, being a good listener and relating well to others are important skills for officials. Communication skills can be improved through commitment and practise.

This resource is divided into three parts:

- A. Human Relations
- B. Communication Skills
- C. Conflict Management



Australian Sports Commission

HUMAN RELATIONS

Sports officials have to deal with specific groups of individuals including players, coaches, other officials, administrators, fans and the media. Different groups require a different approach. Being able to relate to each of these groups appropriately is part of being a good official.

Knowing the rules is the science of sports officiating. But human relations require an artist's touch! Here are some tips on dealing with the following groups:

Officials

Mostly you are on your own in officiating. But a certain amount of mutual support and teamwork is helpful. Here are a few tips for practising teamwork among officials:

- Always arrive early enough to talk to fellow officials before the game - agree on mechanics and any rule interpretations.
- Never be seen to disagree with a fellow official during a game.
- Agree in advance who will call what (and who will not).
- Work out how you may be able to help each other in decision making.
- Discuss any potentially sensitive issues.
- Don't explain your fellow officials' decisions - leave it to them.
- Don't consult extensively with other officials during a contest.

Players

Officials should not be too friendly in dealing with players - nor too aloof. Players tend not to trust an official who seems to be out to win a popularity contest. They prefer an official to act like someone who has an important job to do. Hints for dealing with players include:

- Teach/explain the rules only when appropriate.
- Be approachable - players dislike a domineering approach.
- Hustle and be enthusiastic - players respect that.
- Enforce penalties calmly and confidently.

Coaches

Contact with coaches should be businesslike, friendly, respectful and **limited**. Coaches can become extremely upset and you may need all your tact to deal with them. While you should not overreact to an emotional coach, you **must** deal with any obvious interference in the game.

Spectators (Fans)

Sporting events can be harmed by intense spectator reactions. A calm but efficient official can do a lot to neutralise a potentially explosive situation.

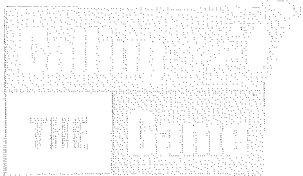
You will never please everyone - nor should you try to. But you should show respect for others, avoid antagonising anyone and be approachable.

Media

Media interest in your sport may increase as you climb the ranks. This kind of public criticism can be very hard to take - especially when you will receive little or no praise for a job well done. Here are some hints for dealing with the media:

- Wait until you have your emotions under control and have collected your thoughts before talking to the media.
- Answer questions about rules or duties of officials but never comment on athletes, coaches, teams or their play.
- Encourage your local sports/officials' body to appoint a spokesperson to deal with media enquiries.
- Invite media to attend appropriate meetings and clinics.
- Treat the media with respect.
- Treat media fairly - don't have favourites.

Notes



Being a good listener is as important as being a good talker.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Effective communication relies on good people relations. This is not about techniques or gimmicks, but being sensitive, understanding and responsive to other people. It is about using your people skills to develop a positive sporting environment, manage conflict situations and to make the game fun and fair for all.

Why Teach Communication?

People who communicate well have an advantage on and off the sports field. Good communication skills are associated with:

- Confidence
- Skill in relating to others
- More satisfying and successful relationships
- Personal power
- Accurate and consistent decision making
- Low stress levels
- A healthy self-concept

Communication in Sport

Sports officials often have to perform in a heated environment! Competition pressure, the emotions of players, coaches and spectators can all distract you from doing your job.

You need to be able to recognise and use the most appropriate communication method for your sport or situation. Note that you will probably need to vary your communication before, during and after a game.

As a communicator your main objectives are based on:

- establishing credibility
- providing the best environment for sporting performance

Experts estimate that 90 percent of conflict in sport occurs because of **how** something was said - not **what** was said.

How We Communicate

Sports officials need to clearly and consistently send the right messages. So it is important to think about the message you are sending and to keep working on your ability to send these messages.

Communication is affected by:

- Words
- Voice tone
- Actions or body language
- Culture, gender, age, ability

Words

Choose your words carefully. The words you use should be appropriate to the people playing your sport.

Voice Tone

Be aware of **how** you say something. The tone of your voice, your timing, the pauses in your speech and the changes in volume all carry as much information as the words themselves.

Actions

Your actions - or body language - all carry a great deal of meaning. Be aware of the way you use facial expressions, posture, gestures, movement and space (distance between people).

Culture, Gender, Age, Ability

Many factors shape the way you communicate with other people, just as these factors affect the way others communicate with you. This means that the message we send is not always the same message that is received.



New Zealand Wheelchair Rugby
Paralympics New Zealand

Two Golden Rules of Communication

- Think about *who* you are communicating with - and use words and actions to suit them and the situation.
- Treat people *appropriately* and *fairly* and they will be far more likely to understand and respect you as an official.

Hints for dealing with people with limited English or hearing disabilities:

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Avoid slang
- Use single words
- Praise questions
- Summarise replies
- Give clear signals, including body language



Netball New Zealand Fun Ferns and Future Ferns initiatives – Bronwyn Warren

Communication Methods

Communicating with players, coaches and fans (and sometimes the media) is a big challenge for sports officials. The messages you send and the way they are received is related to your:

- Status as an official
- Experience
- Technical expertise
- Knowledge of the sport and your role
- Words, tone, attitude and body language

One-way and Two-way Communication

Communication can be divided into two basic types:

1. One-way Communication

One-way communication is that which does not require feedback. Examples are giving directions, speeches, oral presentations, written communications such as media releases, newsletters and signalling a penalty.

One-way communication is fast, direct and orderly. It is more efficient when you have to communicate quickly - and accuracy is easy to achieve.

2. Two-way Communication

Two-way communication is the most common form of connecting with other people. Examples are talking, problem solving, meetings, discussions.

Two-way communication allows for feedback, questions and clarification. It is the better option when accuracy is important. Feedback may make it easier for the official to judge the situation.

The type of communication you use will often depend on your sport and the situation. Referees or umpires have to strike a balance between answering players' questions and keeping the game moving. Continually holding up the game to debate decisions is unacceptable.

*Know what
communication
style is
appropriate for
your sport and
adapt
accordingly.*

Your Communication Style

Be yourself! We all have different ways of doing things. Your officiating style will be related to your personality - and that can be a strength. But beware of being too authoritative or controlling. You will generally be more effective and gain greater respect by using a subtle approach. Being pleasant and calm will achieve more than finger-pointing and arguing.

Strategies for Effective Communication

Officials should strive to be:

- Credible
- Consistent
- Sensitive/understanding
- Open-minded
- Positive in approach and body language
- A good role model
- Focused on performance - not personality

Barriers to Effective Communication

Officials should avoid:

- Judging
- Criticising
- Responding emotionally
- Name-calling
- Shouting
- Threatening
- Moralising
- Bias towards a team or individual
- Excessive talk
- Using inappropriate jargon

HINTS for Effective Communication

Keep cool

Officials are often criticised. Even when provoked, keep your emotions under control.

Speak firmly - but don't shout

Shouters invite criticism. Be firm but stay relaxed.

Look good

Dress neatly and appropriately for your sport. Looking sharp helps you feel and act sharp.

Be confident

Nervousness is easily recognised and can make you vulnerable.

Use clear and timely signals

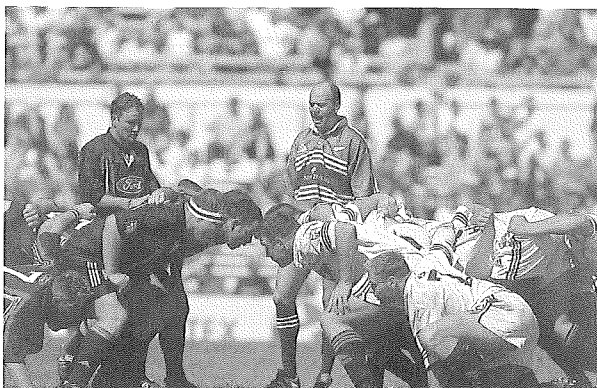
Players deserve this! Avoid pointing a finger, use an open palm.

Be open-minded

Listen to other views. Answer reasonable questions from players and coaches.

Use technology

Make use of technology where appropriate.



Photosource

Improving Communication

Communication can be improved through practice. Use the following tips to improve your skills:

1. Use feedback

Two-way communication allows the official and the player/coach to establish understanding. Use only when appropriate - avoid continual debate.

2. Use face-to-face communication

Talking face-to-face provides more accurate feedback than a telephone conversation or a letter/memo.

3. Be sensitive to players and coaches

People have different values, needs, attitudes and expectations. Try to understand their viewpoint and make it easier to communicate with them. Be approachable.

4. Use simple direct language

Use language that the people in your sport will understand and you will improve your communication.

5. Whoa! Rein yourself in

Always use the least amount of force, persistence or whatever is necessary to do your job. Be low-key and pleasant rather than in-their-face and domineering.

Assertive Communication

You can become more assertive in your communication by:

1. Using 'I' statements rather than 'you'

2. Using the broken record technique

State your position clearly, calmly and persistently. Repeat yourself when necessary. Avoid being side-tracked.

3. Learning to deal with criticism

Learn to use criticism to help you positively change your behaviour. If you can't respond to criticism without emotion and self-defence, wait until you can!

What *NOT* to Say

Here are some examples of inappropriate comments:

Ordering, directing, commanding

"You take this"

"You get me the ball"

Warning, threatening

"If you do that one more time I'll send you off"

"Okay, now you've had it"

Preaching, moralising

"Some people never seem to know when to stop"

"I wish somebody would teach you a bit more respect"

Advising

"Why don't you try and play the game?"

"How about getting your players on side?"

Judging, criticising, blaming

"I would have thought you would know better"

Name calling, ridiculing, shaming

"You clumsy idiot"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself"

Interpreting, psychoanalysing, assuming

"How come you're so penalty prone?"

"You were just trying to get back at me for what I did last game"

Teaching, instructing

"How would you like it if someone did that to you?"

"I wonder if you know how much that annoys me"

Rescuing, intervening

"I guess I'll have to stop you doing that!"

"You'll look ridiculous to everyone if you make that error again"

Expecting too much

"It's so obvious that you should read your rule book"

"Other players remember to plan things before they do them"

Listening

Sports officials often focus on sending messages. But being able to receive and understand messages - and respond to them appropriately is vital. Learn to listen actively and you will improve your relationships with everyone in your sport.

Active listeners:

- Hear the words, tone of voice and the meaning
- Pick up the underlying feeling
- Take in the body language

The main benefits of better listening for sports officials are that it:

- Fosters positive relationships
- Increases trust
- Reduces conflict
- Overcomes communication barriers
- Improves your performance
- Improves the flow of the game

Keys to good listening:

L **Loosen up** - try to relax.

I **Invite feedback** - with your words and body language.

S **Stance** - face person squarely, lean in slightly.

T **Tolerance** - listen to other views.

E **Eye contact** - be attentive, look at the other person but be aware of cultural restrictions.

N **Nearness** - stand about 1 metre - or a culturally appropriate distance - from the other person.

HINTS for Good Listening

1. Listen attentively

All gestures and facial expressions should show acceptance and attention.

2. Listen reflectively

Repeat the player's question or comment. This will help you check that you heard what they said correctly. Paraphrase the question such as "So you're saying that..." or "So you think that..."

Summarise key ideas of longer conversations.

Summarise to:

- recap
- gain focus
- direct conversation
- end conversation

3. Avoid emotional responses

Listening stops when people get over-emotional.

4. Join the conversation

A nod of the head or an occasional "yes" helps players and coaches to know you are tuned in to them. Ask questions when appropriate. Questions help get players/coaches to listen, think and share feelings, and they may uncover important information.

5. Don't interrupt

Don't interrupt!

6. Observe body language

A player's body language will tell you as much as their words about how they feel.

Ten Laws of Human Communication

1. It is not what our message does to the listener, but ***what the listener does with our message***, that determines our success as communicators.
2. People mostly interpret messages in ways which make them feel comfortable and secure.
3. When a person's attitudes are attacked, he or she is likely to defend those attitudes and to reinforce them.
4. People pay most attention to messages relevant to their own lives and point of view.
5. People who feel insecure in a relationship are less likely to listen.
6. People are more likely to listen to us if we listen to them.
7. People are more likely to change when a new experience and communication are combined than through communication alone.
8. People are more likely to support a change which affects them if they are consulted before the change is made.
9. ***What*** is said will be interpreted in the light of ***how, when, where*** and ***by whom*** it is said.
10. Lack of self-knowledge and an unwillingness to resolve our own conflicts make it harder for us to communicate with other people.

Hugh Mackay (1994) *Why Don't People Listen?* Chipendale, NSW: Pan Australia

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

PART C

Conflict is an inevitable part of sport. Knowing the rules and mechanics is not enough - it is often how you handle people in difficult situations that makes a difference.

Managing conflict in a game can be stressful. Even if you perform well and make all the right decisions, you may still feel the heat when calls are close, the game is tight or tension between players erupts. But good officiating is about being able to deal with any situation that arises. Learn to deal with conflict professionally and positively and you will gain respect among players, coaches and fans.

Most conflict situations have these common features:

- High emotion
- Differing points of view
- Threats or acts of violence

As an official you should aim to:

- Uphold the rules/laws of the game
- Reduce the crisis
- Minimise the likelihood of violence or future law breaking
- Help parties move toward a solution



Australian Sports Commission

Conflict Management Strategies

Developing strategies to help you deal with conflict is vital. Some of the following may be appropriate to your sport - and your role in it.

1. Prevention techniques

Prevention is always better than cure! If you establish a subtle influence **early** in the game conflict is less likely to occur.

- Clear your head. Don't take any baggage from your day into the game. You have a duty to players and the game to be ready to officiate.
- Decide before the game what acts/comments deserve a response.
- Talk to players and/or coaches before the game. Outline what you expect and acknowledge their abilities and experience.
- Stay objective, no matter what your prior knowledge of players/teams.
- Make competitors aware of your presence by reacting immediately to rule infringements (when appropriate).
- Be definite and firm - but beware of appearing too controlling and self-important.
- Look sharp and act sharp - this will gain you respect as an official.
- Don't take criticisms personally. Remember that coaches and players are seeing the game from a different perspective to yours.

2. Be professional

Speak clearly and firmly in heated situations. This will indicate that you are confident in managing the situation. Avoid argument or debate, and don't try to bluff your way through with unjustified rulings.

3. Keep cool

Don't over-react. Stay relaxed and adopt a low-key posture. Use objective, neutral language.

4. Compromise

Where appropriate make a decision based on a compromise between the conflicting parties. This keeps everyone happy and will require less enforcement. However, be aware that a compromise may not be reached and the final decision will rest with you.

5. Address the problem - not the emotions

Try to put aside the emotions of all parties. Emotions inevitably inflame the situation. Deal with the facts and the available evidence and you are more likely to be seen as making a fair and accurate decision.

6. Focus on the person

People are not objects - they will object strongly to being treated as such. Show empathy for players' concerns and your decisions are more likely to be respected.

7. Be fair

Avoid team or individual bias at all costs. Being seen to have integrity is one of your greatest assets.

8. Be confident and open

Don't be defensive or try to justify your actions. Clarify decisions when appropriate based on the facts and the evidence presented.

9. Be firm

Deal with foul play firmly and quickly.

*Remember 90%
of conflict
occurs not with
what was said
but the tone in
which it was
said!*



Canterbury Hockey Umpires Association

What to Tolerate from Whom

Officials sometimes get criticised by everyone involved in a game, from spectators to players. You have to set your own boundaries about what to tolerate - and from whom. Below is a rough guide:

Fans

Fans probably require the most tolerance - but do not tolerate their threats to players' or officials' safety. The golden rule is **never talk back to fans** - it only increases their abuse. You may find yourself in a situation where an abusive fan has to be removed. Below is a guideline for the best way to do this:

- Do not say anything to the offending fan.
- Stop the game, then approach the administrator and explain why the fan needs to be removed.
- Let the administrator handle the ejection. Don't do it yourself.
- Delay the game until the problem is resolved.

Coaches

Some coaches can be very difficult to deal with, especially when they are losing. Here are some tips:

- Don't stereotype - not all coaches are going to cause trouble.
- Before the game make sure coaches see you as approachable. Let them know if necessary that you expect them to contribute to the smooth running of the game.
- The time and type of game, score and spectator environment can all upset coaches. Be aware of these and be prepared. Use preventative measures whenever possible.
- Administer penalties without losing your cool and continue to concentrate on the game.
- Avoid arguing with a coach who is trying to bully you. Don't make threats you can't follow through with. If you let a coach get away with 'bad' behaviour, it is likely the opposing coach will do the same.

Players

Try to keep players in the game because it is they who the fans have come to see. But don't allow them to be abusive. Use preventative officiating as much as possible. Penalise them when that fails.

- Be firm but fair.
- Deal promptly and decisively with foul play.
- Use captains to maintain discipline.

Warnings and Penalties**1. Informal warnings**

Informal warnings are used in situations that need attention but are not bad enough to penalise. Often your voice will be effective. Sometimes it won't be enough. That's when formal warnings or penalties should be used.

There are three types of informal warnings:

- *The quiet word* - be low key and speak only to those involved. Use positive statements and point to the common goal.
- *The verbal warning* - be firm and strong but don't yell. Use this in front of other players - this will alert them to keep the offender in check.
- *The visual warning* - use a stop gesture with your open palm to show you have had or heard enough. The visual warning is the last step before penalising. Most players or coaches will back off quickly.

2. Formal warnings or penalties

Repeated informal warnings are ineffective. You will be seen to be 'crying wolf' and those in the game will take liberties. Strive not to repeat the visual warning stage - penalise the offender if he/she steps out of line again.

Know the rules for your sport. Knowing when to penalise is one of the most difficult tasks for a new official. You don't want to be known as an official with a 'quick trigger', nor do you want to be known as soft. Strive for the middle ground and time penalties to demonstrate early what is to be tolerated - and what is not.

Remember, if your concentration is broken by someone or something, it is worth addressing, informally at first; next time with a penalty. If you have to eject someone from the game, do it quickly and without emotion. Keep your cool and you will earn the respect of players, coaches and fans.

Below are some common behaviours that require an automatic penalty:

- Swearing that is clearly audible to other players, coaches and (especially) fans.
- A coach on the field or court arguing with an official.
- Excessive gestures from players while complaining to officials.
- Physical contact with an official.
- Excessive derogatory comments, particularly those that begin with "you...." such as "You're a terrible ref" or "You don't know what you're doing."



New Zealand Hockey Federation

Handling Conflict After the Game

Most games end without serious conflict. However conflict management often continues after the game is over. Here are ways to diffuse potential conflict:

- Leave the field or court as soon as possible. Leave with fellow officials. Hanging around annoyed players or coaches can invite trouble.
- Unwind mentally before you speak to anyone. Answer appropriate questions when you are ready. Avoid arguments at all costs.
- Speak to the media only when you have your emotions in check. If you are upset, say you have "no comment at this stage".
- If you have had to deal with unsporting conduct, speak to the game or competition administrator before making a written report. Most administrators like - and deserve - to know about potential problems straight away.
- Your sport will have a procedure for filing match or misconduct reports. Find out what is required from you and follow the procedure.

Misconduct Reports

Most sports have standard match or assessment reports on which you can record any misconduct problems. Write the report as soon as possible after the game so the details are fresh in your mind.

The tone you set in your report is important as it reflects on your credibility. Be specific but don't exaggerate or speculate; don't make statements you can't prove or arrive at your own conclusions. You should also avoid recommending a course of action: your job is to relate the facts as you saw them - not to pass judgement.

Consider having another respected official read your report before you hand it in.

Keep a copy in case you are later asked to clarify your statements. If you don't hear about the outcome, follow up. You have a right to know what action was taken.

Judicial Hearings

If you are required to speak at a judicial hearing, know the process for your sport and your role in it.

Managing Conflict After the Season

The benefits of keeping a logbook are stressed in the resource guide *Becoming a More Effective Official*. Keep a record of your officiating. A logbook is a great way to look back and see if you have patterns of behaviour that need adjusting or improving. If the same problems keep cropping up in your logbook, you should address them.

Use your logbook to help plan your conflict management for next season.

HINTS for Dealing With an Angry Person

Never get angry with an angry person. You will only increase their anger.

Recognise their anger. Acknowledge their feelings in an appropriate way.

Speak quietly. Remain as low-key as possible.

Use low-key body language to show you are not a threat.

Suggestions for Difficult Situations

Situation

Strategy/Action

People who know-it-all

- Acknowledge them, but seek other opinions.
- Use a resource if they are part of a team.
- Use them to assist you in game management.

Player who keeps criticising you

- Be professional, continue to treat the person with courtesy.
- Don't react or make a big deal out of it. If the situation continues and is disrupting the group, then go straight to the competitor and ask "What's the problem?"
- Remember that by confronting an individual, you may isolate them from other members of the team. So try to involve one other person such as the captain.

Player who talks too much

- Don't panic. One or two talkers can add to the competition dynamics.
- Use their peers to help quieten talkers. If this doesn't work you may have to cut in and talk directly to the offender.

Player who argues

- Short cut the discussion by focusing on the decision.
- Seek an indication that the player will try to prevent the situation arising again.

Player who argues but has the rule wrong

- Be sure you are right!
- Clarify the rule/s but try not to embarrass the competitor.

Summary

Congratulations! You have now completed the *Calling the Game People Management* component.

Good sports officials are good people managers. Knowing the rules is the science of sports officiating. But people management needs an artist's touch!

On behalf of the Hillary Commission, thanks for taking the time to improve your officiating skills. And thanks for all you do for New Zealand sport.

Sport needs you.



Australian Sports Commission