

Greetings,

This is the first of several messages that I will send you this season. Please feel free to contact me if I put something in the message that you disagree with.

Today's message deals with 'Five Perspectives of the Match.'

A conclusion that I have come to is that there are five different perspectives on almost every action that occurs on the pitch. For simplicity's sake, I will reference these perspectives throughout the rest of this note as: The Red Team's Fans, The Red Team, The Blue Team, The Blue Team's Fans, and the officials.

- The Red Team's Fans know a little about the game. They are the family, neighbors, schoolmates, and friends of the players. They come to the match to support their team and watch them win.
- The Red Team is comprised of the players and coaches. They know the game pretty well, and they came to play and win.
- The Blue Team's Fans know a little about the game. They are the family, neighbors, schoolmates, and friends of the players. They come to the match to support their team and watch them win. (Does this sound familiar?)
- The Blue Team is comprised of the players and coaches. They know the game pretty well, and they came to play and win. (Does this sound familiar?)
- The officials know the game very well. They have attended training, they have taken annual proficiency examinations, and they have (in most cases) officiated hundreds of similar matches. They were assigned to the game by a third party. They intend to enforce the laws/rules of the game so that the match is safe and fair to all players. They do not care which team wins the match.

As you can see, four of the five groups have an agenda. That is, they want to see their team (Red or Blue) win the match. The fifth group has no agenda other than to enforce the laws/rules of the game so that the match is safe and fair to all players. This dynamic is why there are five perspectives on every call the referees make – or choose not to make. What does this mean?

It means that every time the referee blows the whistle, at least half of the people present are not happy. BTW, the other half are not necessarily happy either. (i.e. instead of 'just' a foul "...it should have been a caution/send off/penalty kick.") You might be saying to yourself, "So what?"

The 'so what' is that you need to get used to not being the beloved referee you hoped to be. You should expect to hear players, coaches, and fans complain about calls and non-calls. In my opinion, if you have worked hard to get it right, and you think you made the right call, then don't worry about the comments. Expect them. This is not to say that you should accept abuse from anyone. There is a line that should not be crossed, and you should deal with it if someone crosses the line.

As a long-time soccer referee another conclusion I have come to is that I don't get all the calls right. I try very hard to be in the right position and make the correct decision. Unfortunately, due to a variety of circumstances on the pitch I sometimes miss the call. (There's no need to go into the circumstances here; that's for another day.) The bottom line for me is that I always try to make the right call. I can live with my mistakes as long as this is true.

Have a good season!

Bill

William Gessner
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