

Greetings,

I found this perspective on the characteristics of a good referee in a blog on Soccerreferee.com. I don't know who wrote it, but I thought it was good enough to pass on to you all. I did remove some of the editorial comments and changed a word or two to apply to the high school game.

1. COMPETENCE: This is the foundation from which the other characteristics are built. There is absolutely no substitute for an official having a thorough understanding of the current **NFHS Rules of the Game** – for referees with five or more years' experience, everything printed in the booklet should be second nature.

2. COMPASSION: Effective referees show their human side when cooling down an overly excited coach, and express empathy to an injured player and his upset mother. How well do you motivate your assistant referees to help you and the game? Do you encourage them during your pre-game, engage them during stoppages in play, and then look to them for help and guidance when you (and the game) need it? I hope you don't tune them out by starting your pre-game with "Don't worry about fouls inside the penalty area."

3. CONFIDENCE: So, how do you carry yourself on the pitch? What does your body language convey? Keep your shoulders back, chest out, and head up. Look like you are happy to be out there and that there's nowhere else you'd rather be. Smile when it's appropriate. If it's a challenging match at a level you aren't accustomed to, let your confidence rise to the occasion. Be ready to flash a player a scowl and the "knock it off" sign when it's warranted... and be prepared to back it up!

4. COMMUNICATION: Effective referees consistently exchange CLEAR information with other officials and the game at key moments, using crisp, clear APPROVED signals. When the heat is on, we expect the referee to be able to calmly explain a decision to an irate captain so that he can take a message back to his team. Sometimes, the game demands a quick verbal exchange with an SR, to identify the culprit, color of the card, and reason for the sanction. Make eye contact! Here's a suggestion – and you can apply it at every level of competition: make eye contact with the crew at every stoppage.

5. CONSISTENCY: As we grow with the game, we become more comfortable identifying foul play (challenges, tactical fouls, handling, DOGSO, misconduct), and as we accept more challenging assignments, we adapt and re-evaluate what constitutes foul play for the level of competition. Treat all players (from both sides) equally, from the opening kick-off to the final whistle. A foul that warrants a caution in the first half should also warrant a caution in the second. A tactical foul by the blue team is the same as a tactical foul by the white team.

6. COURAGE: There are times when the referee **MUST** make a decision that could affect the outcome of the game... "The Moment of Truth." Examples include: Handball in the Penalty Area. DOGSO. A clear Tactical Foul that demands issuance of a Second Caution. We can't always be popular, and we should always leave our ego in the car or dressing room. No one wants it to happen... but when it does happen, react with the heart of a lion.

7. CONVICTION: There's an old saying: "Presence lends conviction." I agree that "being there" when making the crucial call is a great first step – the game will be more accepting if you appear to be in ideal position. But it's only the first step. When you have to show a red card or award that penalty kick, be prepared for the game to react... and the reaction may not be favorable since half of the game's participants are going to be adversely affected by your decision. Keep your composure, avoid mass confrontation, and above all... stick to your guns! Remember: YOU didn't commit the foul or misconduct; the offending player did!

Don't forget about the HSSO website ([Colorado High School Soccer Officials](#)); it can help you throughout the season. Have a great one!

Bill

William Gessner
President
Colorado High School Soccer Officials