

USSF Tips for Having a Good Game

The keys to having a good game:

>> My age old philosophy is, "If I keep the game safe and fair, everything else will take care of itself." Players and coaches will always disagree with your decisions, but if they believe that they are protected and that you are fair, they will work with you. Humor, compassion, and accuracy are therefore great tools. Humor releases tension and breeds control for most players. Compassion convinces that you truly care about their safety. Accuracy engenders confidence in your decisions.

Adjust to what the players want called, and manage the moment of truth(s). If you correctly manage the MOT, you will have another. However, if you don't handle it correctly, there won't be another.

Remember the adage: 1.) Did you keep it fair? 2.) Did you keep it safe? 3.) Did you not take any bull from the players for doing the first two things? 4.) Did you affect the outcome or result?

>> Recognize the simple stuff and deal with it. The players will adjust. Referees are orchestrators. You have to know when to let them play and when to drop the baton

>> Maintain concentration for the entire match. If you know you made a bad call, forget about it. Players forget about their mistakes. Be prepared for the next call. Fitness. Know your role

>> The biggest things is to have an open mind and a good attitude. Treat every game like it is the most important game being played in the world

>> There is a lot of common sense in the game, and just reading play and players, game control. Not much of that stuff changes. Approach the game with the right attitude. Sometimes it is difficult to not allow problems or concerns in your personal life to affect the attitude you have at game time, but you should do your best to keep the game foremost in your mind. It is also sometimes difficult to not allow previous experiences with certain coaches, players or teams to affect your attitude concerning for the game at hand. Referees are to be held to a higher standard--it is not a position to take advantage of power trips, to hold a grudge, or issue your own personal justice. Treat everyone with respect. Even when the participants do not show you respect or lose sight of the big picture, you must still remain unquestionable in the respect you show

>> Handle things early so you don't have to handle them later. Do you understand the game at a high level for not only the play but also the gamesmanship? You have to be aware of everything that's going on in the match. And do you get it? Do you know why he fouled the attacker 25 yards out? Do you know why he just subbed the star player in? Do you know who the star players is for each team and why? You have to have a feeling for the game

>> Read 'The Psychology of Officiating'. Be close to play, not in the way, make a call, enforce the restart location and then get the hell out of the way by moving down field in the direction of

where the likely restart will send the ball. Don't linger around the restart location where players can appeal the decision and delay restarts

>> Referees are orchestrators. If you don't like the way they are playing, get them out of there. In amateur games, there is always an asshole on each team. Be assertive with them and tell them to knock it off. Cut the head off the snake and everyone else will fall into place. If you take care of positioning, everything else will fall into place. After that comes perception

>> There's a difference between knowing the rules and knowing how to referee. Understanding the art of refereeing would imply that you know the rules, but you have to have the common sense to manage the spirit of the game. If you let the SOTG be your overriding factor, most everything you do will be true to the integrity of the game. Once you establish boundaries in the first 15 minutes, players will settle down and play. If the first caution didn't modify a player's behavior, it was ineffective. Sell your decisions. Stay focused. There are many complaints, arguments, and insults which arise during the course of the match. Use your common sense to diffuse situations and respond accordingly with your cards to protect players, not your ego. We control how the players play, let your first calls set the tone. It's easier to have control first than to try to get it back. Always listen

>> Be honest on the field and give the game a fair effort. Communicate effectively with the players and also your crew

>> Take a firm line against players who try to deceive and make the game less enjoyable, such as, diving, vicious tackles, time wasting, delaying the restart, professional bench decorum

>> Deal with bench decorum and dissent. These two things can destroy your game

>> Always be humble. Respect is first giving respect. Prepare. Players hate bad calls, missed calls, and unfair misconduct (yellow when it should have been red). Focus and concentrate. Learn to read the game from a technical and tactical perspective. Not many referees really understand the tactics and techniques of soccer. Do you?

>> Before you start any match, look at the standings and understand what each team has to win or lose. This foresight can be invaluable as you prepare for a match

>> Whatever game you're refing is the most important game of the day. If the players walk off and feel they got a fair shake, you probably did well. That doesn't mean they have to agree with every call, though. Read the game in terms of style of play and how individual players play their game. Be aware of tactics and player tendencies and have a good feel for the moment of truth in match. Sometimes quick cards or being overly authoritative is needed because of developing situations or problems on the field

>> As referees, we have ethics. Our duty is to the game. We are guided by the LOTG and no one has the right to just make up their own rules. Make an effort to understand the game

enough to know what a player may be thinking throughout a match. The best position is one in which the referee can make the right decision. Get the call correct and consider the best position to enable you to make the next decision

>> Control your emotions. Admit you are wrong (do not do this on major decisions). Stamp your authority on the game.

>> Confidence but not arrogance. Try to be proactive. Expect fouls to occur and call them as quickly as they should. Don't try to referee outside your personality. Have fun, even in challenging games. The players and fans will see and feel it.

>> Be prepared for that particular game. Believe in yourself. Self-evaluation is a huge key. Avoid decisions that may have been technically correct, but practically wrong

>> Get the calls right, make sure both teams feel they got a fair shake, have fun. Be yourself. There's always something you can learn

>> Control the controllables. Presence, proximity to play, and a quick wit to deal with players

>> Be yourself. Confidence, which comes from knowing the laws, having the experience to know what calls to make, how to manage yourself to get a game to flow. You have to show the players you understand the game and will make the right decision for the good game. A big part of this is building a dialogue with key players

>> Mental and physical preparation. Ensure your mind and body are ready for the game. Have you done all your homework on the teams? What is riding on this game? Match management is a catch all phrase, but it is the soul of a great game. One incorrect foul, or one controversial decision, will not ruin a match if you have great match management. Match management is putting together the whole game, from actions off the field to players and situations on the field, including your interactions with all involved

>> Fitness and teamwork. If you're the referee, be the best. If you're an AR or the 4th, then be the best

>> Enjoy the game, do what you need to maintain game control, don't call the trivial things unless it is needed for match control, smile, and have fun. Always expect the unexpected. Screw things can and will happen in a match which is why the pregame is crucial. Put your stamp of authority on the match. You need to know as much about the players and teams that you can ahead of time. The biggest thing in dealing with player management is knowing the feel of the game. What does the match require at any given point? Are you able to tell when the tempo is increasing and thus require a higher level of intensity from the crew? Let the players tell you what the match needs; pay attention to them, but don't allow them to game you

>> Relax and enjoy yourself. Talk to players and treat them as equals; don't be afraid to praise them for great plays, or to sympathize with them when they are injured. Remain confident even

if you don't really feel it. You get what you reward. If the only time the players hear you is when you're warning them or chastising them, they'll continue. If, however, they hear you praising quality plays or instances of fair play, they'll do more of that

>> Communicate clearly, set the standard

>> Listen to the players. If you are good at picking up on the clues they give you, you can referee blindfolded. Use these hints as your guide through the game. Call the simple fouls before they get too complex. Know what you want to tolerate, read players' reactions, and be approachable/personable

>> Have the right character, the knowledge and ability to apply the laws correctly, and be in the right spot at the right time. Display a positive demeanor with the players, yet be authoritative and under control at all times

>> The first is match control. Second, did you follow US Soccer directives and apply them correctly? Are you fit and did you show it? Did you apply the laws correctly and deal with situations that needed to be dealt with? ARs must do all this plus Law 11 understanding and application

>> Two fundamental principles for ARs: positioning and patience. Teamwork and communication are imperative

>> Be confident, be firm, make your signals clear and look at your assistants

>> Professionalism, positioning, and demeanor (keep calm)

>> Proper preparation (rest, personal and business issues in order, hydrated, etc.). Have an understanding of your fellow referees is important too. Be knowledgeable of the players, coaches, standings, and history to help put the match into context. Expect the unexpected

>> Stay calm and explain decisions when necessary. Work hard at working with the players

>> Learn from everyone on the field

>> Be disciplined and stay focused

>> Try to give the players what they ask for. If they want more fouls called, call them. If they want fewer fouls called, call fewer fouls. When they talk, try to listen. Protect the talented players from cynical fouls. Call the simple fouls quickly. Don't let a simple game escalate into a brawl. If the referee is getting the easy calls right, the players will generally cut some slack on the controversial calls

>> Set the tone early. Deal with dissent. Listen and respect players. What you let happen in a match will be repeated. It does not matter how early it occurs, you must deal with them as

though the game demands it. Additionally, fitness, research of the teams and players, know the laws, be confident but not overconfident, be 100% mentally ready, and enjoy yourself

>> Personality is critical. If players and coaches feel you can be friendly, firm, even angry without the emotion then you have a good feel for the game. Make sure everyone feels they're getting a fair shake. If they feel you know the game, then you are better received. Preventive officiating is key, positioning is vital. If you're right next to play during a breakaway, you can talk and prevent an ugly situation from happening, at least make your presence known with a word or two for the same reason if a foul does or if a no foul takes place and as the player gets up to complain and the first thing they see if you right in front of them, they know you were there to see it all. Early is the time to set the bar. Hustle, know the game through a players view, be approachable and have fun

>> Quickly identify what type of match the players want to play and adjust the level to accommodate them. Consistency in level of fouls and discipline. Being in position to both see an incident then prevent any escalation. For positioning, look where you start, not where you end up. Be approachable and take time with players (don't just ignore them)

>> Physical preparation, mental preparation, and a thorough pregame

>> Talk to players during the game when you need to address something. Be receptive to their concerns and not dismissive. While play is flowing, use your voice to prevent fouls. Look a player in the eye when you talk to her/him. Have fun and look like it. Look for a "friend" who can help you when certain players are getting out of hand

>> Be rested and mentally ready. Do not tolerate dissent. Body language/mechanics are key as perception for referees is crucial

>> As a ref, you need to shoot for acceptance from all involved- players, coaches, fans. People may not agree with your decisions, but if they accept them and what you're doing, you will be ok. Set the boundaries so the players know what is and is not acceptable in this game