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With thanks to: The New Zealand Academy of Sport, the National Officiating Programme at the Australian Institute of Sport, Ausport.gov.au and ACC's SportSmart programme.

TIP NO 1

Injury prevention and injury management

Successful injury prevention must be part of an integrated strategy that covers all the issues that lead to sporting injuries. ACC's SportSmart programme for injury prevention outlines a 10-point plan that will help you reduce the risk of injury during sport.

- 1) **Screening**
Assess your risk of injury before the season starts.
- 2) **Warm-up, cool-down and stretch**
Incorporating these elements into all training or game-day activities will dramatically reduce your chance of injury. (See Tip Card 3)
- 3) **Physical conditioning**
Get fit and stay fit by following a balanced training programme before, during and after your season. (See Tip Card 2)
- 4) **Technique**
Applying good technique when undertaking a specific activity will reduce your risk of injury
- 5) **Fair play**
You can prevent your own injuries and injuries to others by explaining the rules of the game and applying them consistently.
- 6) **Protective equipment**
Use good-quality protective equipment and make sure you know how to use it.
- 7) **Hydration and nutrition**
Eat the right foods before, during and after a training session or game, and make sure you drink plenty of fluids to replace what you lose during physical activity. (See Tip Card 4)

- 8) **Injury surveillance**
Gather information on the injuries in your sport as they occur. This helps to find out why they happen – and how they can be prevented in future.
- 9) **Environment**
Ensure your sporting environment is safe – consider the weather, the facilities, the playing surfaces and the equipment used. Report hazards and remove or mitigate them if at all possible.
- 10) **Injury management**
Apply first aid as soon as an injury occurs and don't officiate if you have a nagging injury.

(Source: www.acc.co.nz)

For more information visit
www.acc.co.nz/sportsmart



TIP NO 2

Physical conditioning for sports officials

Getting fit and staying fit

Regardless of whether your role requires you to have speed and stamina to keep up with the play and make accurate decisions in short timeframes, or whether you are required to sit still and apply intense concentration for long periods of time, being physically fit will help you.

Key elements of physical fitness include:

- Aerobic endurance
- Muscular fitness
- Flexibility
- Speed and agility

Here are some general training principles that can be applied to any role in any sport:

- 1) Be specific – your training should match your personal situation.
- 2) Increase the load – gradually increase the intensity and work a little bit harder than you used to.
- 3) Build it up – gradually increase the length of your training (no more than 2 percent each week).
- 4) Don't stop – fitness is not permanently stored, so keep at it, all year round.
- 5) Vary it – keep your training varied to prevent boredom.
- 6) Assess your fitness – monitor your fitness levels to see improvements.

TIP NO 3

Warm-up, cool-down and stretch

They're more important than you know

Warming-up, cooling-down and stretching help to prevent injury in both training and game situations

Warm-up and stretch

Your body needs the chance to adjust to an increase in physical effort, and it needs to prepare to work at its best for you.

- Start with some low-impact aerobic activity (such as jogging, cycling or skipping) for at least 10 minutes to get your heart working and your muscles warm.
- Intersperse your aerobic activity every 5–10 minutes with stretches.

Cool-down and stretch

Cooling down after a game or training increases your rate of recovery and decreases your chances of injury the next time you are active. Cooling down is also the best time to improve your range of flexibility.

- Get gently active again – about five minutes of easy aerobic activity like jogging, brisk walking or using the “low intensity” on a gym’s cardio equipment.
- Stretch for about 10 minutes following your easy aerobic cool-down, or you can intersperse your stretches throughout. If you want greater flexibility, use static stretches and hold for at least 30 seconds during the cool-down as this will help muscles relax and reduce tension.

TIP NO 4

Nutrition

What to eat to maximise your performance

The nutritional requirements of sports officials will vary, depending on the level of involvement – the more active you are, the more carefully you will need to control your nutrition.

- **Variety**
Choose a wide variety of foods from all the major food groups. This gives you the best scope for getting the right nutrients to allow your body to perform at its best.
- **Eating enough carbohydrates**
Carbohydrates are still the best source of energy during high-intensity or prolonged exercise. Anyone who is involved in regular exercise needs plenty of carbohydrates.
- **Protein**
Ensure that your diet includes an adequate amount of protein (preferably in a low-fat form such as lean meats and low-fat dairy).
- **Monitoring fat intake**
Eat a diet that is lower in fat, especially saturated fat (e.g. animal fats). Choose low-fat dairy foods and lean meats. High-fat meals and snacks should be used as occasional treats only.
- **Fluids**
Keep up your daily fluid intake with plenty of water, plus fruit juice and sports drinks as required. Drink extra fluids during and after training or games.
- **Pre-event and recovery**
Eat breakfast every day and have a high-carb meal or snack 3–4 hours before a game or serious training session.

Recover by rehydrating and refueling with a sports drink, flavoured milk or fruit juice within an hour of heavy training. Fluid and rapidly absorbed carbohydrates are an essential part of your recovery process.



TIP NO 5

Rest and recovery

Why they're so important for officials

Getting enough rest and allowing for recovery after training, games or tournaments are an essential part of a good training programme.

Rest and recovery tips

- **Passive rest – switching your mind off**
Sleep is the most important form of passive rest. Other forms of passive rest use techniques to switch the mind off while you are awake – including meditation, flotation, reading, listening to music.
- **Active rest – resting during and after a workout**
Active rest can be built into the body and the end of a training session. Active rest activities help:
 - Physiological recovery – light aerobic activity e.g. walking, pool work or cycling.
 - Musculoskeletal recovery – stretching and other posture-promoting exercises help your body to function well without injury.
- **Rest days – taking time out**
Rest at least one day per week (i.e. no training or games that day at all). This allows for physical recovery time and gives you time for your other interests, which in turn will help keep you interested in your sport.

TIP NO 6

Performing under pressure

Tips for managing stress and improving concentration

- **Managing stress**

Stress can cause you to rush your decisions, become angry or irrational and reduce your concentration.

Strategies for coping with stress

- Be aware of your emotional state.
- Learn to control your breathing.
- Be positive and enjoy yourself – this can help you change the way you react to difficult situations. Smile when you start to feel tense.
- Take evasive action – know what your sources of stress are and take a “mini-break” by thinking about other things when you feel the stress starting to build up.

- Stay focused on the action – keep your mind on what is happening now, not what happened five minutes ago.

- **Improving concentration**

Concentration is a mental skill that can be learned with practice, patience and persistence. Focus on the relevant cues in the competitive action whilst blocking out the crowd and other distractions. With practise you will be able to concentrate better for longer.

What causes concentration lapses?

- 1) Thinking about your mistakes – acknowledge a mistake and move on.
- 2) Thinking about the future – don't anticipate problems that may not arise.
- 3) Thinking about too many things – un-clutter your mind.

TIP NO 7

Improving your performance

Becoming a more effective official

A big part of improving your performance as a sports official is reflecting on your past performance – so you know what to avoid in future.

Reflecting on your performance requires a systematic approach. Three common methods include:

1) **Using a logbook**

Record the main calls or judgements you made during a sporting event that you controlled. Reflect on what you did, and areas for improvement. Make a plan to practise and follow it up regularly.

2) **Mentor/s**

Speak to other officials, coaches and or players to see what they think of your performance and what they think your areas for improvement are. Use a mentor in a structured way – ask them if they are willing to work with you over time to improve your performance.

3) **Video review**

Record and review your performance so you can see what others see. Look for areas of success and areas for improvement, then make a plan to work through any issues raised.

Have a basic questionnaire ready to hand out to players, coaches and spectators who you think might be able to give you honest and practical feedback. Ask them to rate your performance from 1 to 10, using questions such as:

- How was my performance overall?
- How was my judgement and decision-making?
- How was my signalling and communication?
- Was I positioned on the field correctly?
- Were my decisions consistent?
- Did I handle conflict well?
- Did I handle external factors such as pitch conditions, weather and spectators well?
- Please provide general comments on today's performance.



TIP NO 8

Managing people

Communication skills

To be a good official, you must be able to communicate clearly and consistently. Good communication requires conscious thought about what types of messages you are sending and receiving.

Body language

Use your physical appearance, your posture, gestures and facial expressions to get your messages across during a game or an event. That way, the athletes don't have to hear you to know what you expect of them.

Tone of voice

This is not about WHAT you say – rather, it's about HOW you say it. Your tone of voice is significantly affected by your emotions, so you need to keep track of how you are feeling emotionally as you perform your officiating duties.

Words

Choose your words carefully – the words you use should be appropriate for the people who are playing your sport. Avoid swearing or derogatory words.

Hints for effective communication

- **Keep cool.** Keep your emotions under control, even if provoked.
- **Speak firmly, but don't shout.** Shouters lose respect and invite criticism.
- **Look good.** Dress neatly and appropriately for your sport. This invites respect for your position, and can help you perform better.
- **Be confident.** Nervousness is easily recognised (through non-verbal signals) and can make you vulnerable.
- **Use clear and timely signals.** Players deserve this, and it's your job. Avoid pointing your finger – use an open palm instead.
- **Be open-minded.** Listen to other views and answer reasonable questions from players and coaches.
- **Use technology.** Make use of the available technology where appropriate.

TIP NO 9

Managing people

Conflict management

- Conflict is an inevitable part of sport. People are passionate about sport, and passion invites conflict. So knowing the rules and mechanics is not enough – it's often how you handle people in difficult situations that will make you stand out as a good sports official.

Conflict management strategies

- 1) **Prevention techniques**
Prevention is always better than the cure! If you establish a subtle influence on the game early in the game, conflict is less likely to occur.
- 2) **Be professional**
Speak clearly and firmly in heated situations – avoid arguments and don't bluff your way through unjustified rulings.
- 3) **Keep cool**
Don't overreact. Adopt a low-key posture. Use objective, neutral language.
- 4) **Compromise**
Where appropriate, make a decision based on a compromise between conflicting parties. Where compromise can't be met, be prepared to make the final decision.
- 5) **Address the problem – not the emotions**
Deal with the facts and use the available evidence when dealing with conflict.

- 6) **Focus on the person**
People are not objects – show empathy for players' concerns.
- 7) **Be fair**
Avoid team or individual bias at all costs.
- 8) **Be confident and open**
Don't be defensive or try to justify your actions. Clarify decisions using the facts when appropriate.
- 9) **Be firm**
Deal with foul play firmly and quickly.



TIP NO 10

Managing people

Dealing with Spectator Abuse

As a sports official, you can't expect everyone to agree with your judgement calls 100% of the time. Often, spectators and others will disagree with your decisions and occasionally become hostile and abusive towards you.

How to deal with spectator abuse

- **Block it out.** Ignore the comments as best you can. You can do this by focusing carefully on specific aspects of the game.
- **Don't take it personally.** If you take the abuse to heart, you will find it harder to concentrate on your performance, which can lead to errors.
- **Remain calm.** Concentrate on doing your job well.
- **Don't react.** Never respond to spectator abuse (no matter how badly you want to).

Managing serious abuse

Very occasionally spectator abuse can spill over from the usual verbal insults to threatened or actual physical abuse. Your sporting body should have a set of guidelines covering what you should do in this situation. Don't be afraid to stop the game and call for help if you need it.

Support and counselling

Sometimes spectator abuse can wear you down and have a negative effect on your ability or desire to officiate. If you are concerned about the impact that this abuse is having on you, talk to others about it. Seek support from more experienced officials and the administrators of your sport.

(Source: www.ausport.gov.au)

TIP NO 11

Your role and responsibilities

Knowing what your job is and how to do it well

Officials must be fair-minded and courageous and are critical to the health of organised sport. Officials ensure that games are played fairly and by the rules, within the spirit of the rules and in a safe manner.

Officials then, in differing capacities, will complete some or all of the following tasks.

- Officiate at sports events, games or competitions to maintain standards of play and to ensure that game rules are observed
- Judge performances in sporting competitions in order to award points, impose scoring penalties and determine results
- Signal participants or other officials to make them aware of infractions or to otherwise regulate play or competition
- Inspect sporting equipment and/or examine participants to ensure compliance with event and safety regulations
- Keep track of event times, including race times and elapsed time during game segments, starting and stopping play when necessary
- Start races and competitions
- Resolve claims of rule infractions or complaints by participants and assess any necessary penalties, according to regulations
- Verify scoring calculations before competition winners are announced
- Direct participants to assigned areas such as starting blocks or penalty zones
- Report to regulating organisations regarding sporting activities, complaints made and actions taken or needed such as fines or other disciplinary actions.

(Source: <http://online.onetcenter.org>)

