



WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A VOLUNTEER OFFICIAL?

Officials play an extremely important role in any sport. Without officials giving up their time most sporting competitions would be unable to function.

Officiating can be a challenging role and, unfortunately, some officials are subjected to hostile behaviour by participants, spectators and others. Officials need to be able to perform their role in a positive manner, and block out the 'nonsense' that can be generated by spectators (note: see the fact sheet 'Dealing with Abuse' for further information on this issue).

Officials need to ensure that their approach towards officiating is in line with the aims of the competition (for example, junior competitions are usually aimed at fun and skill development, rather than winning). Officials should be aware that their approach to officiating can influence the participants' experience and enjoyment of the sport.

Each official becomes the 'face' of officiating at competitions. People often judge all officials by how an individual official behaves, hence the need for professional and responsible approaches when dealing with participants, coaches, administrators and others involved with competitions. Some sporting organisations have a uniform that officials are expected to wear while officiating at sanctioned or formal competitions. It is important that officials present officiating in a positive, professional and respectful manner.

Officials undertake an important role in the staging of competitions. They provide leadership and guidance to participants in a facilitative manner, ensuring that the competition is conducted safely and fairly. Qualities such as integrity, honesty, trustworthiness and respect are integral to the role of the official.

This includes how they behave and relate to others prior to, during and following competition; how they present themselves as an official; and how they go about their role. Officials are responsible for their actions and attitude. People expect the official to be a person they can trust to control the competition.

The physical requirements of an official will vary from sport to sport and within sports. Some sports require officials to be very active (for example, rugby league, basketball, netball), while others less so (for example, equestrian, athletics, rowing). Adopting a healthy lifestyle will encourage other officials to be in appropriate physical condition. Officiating in some sports will require additional physical preparation appropriate to the particular sport. The more active officiating roles require a level of physical fitness that will allow the official to achieve correct positioning throughout the competition, make good decisions and officiate the competition in a non-distressed physical state.

It is important that officials fulfil these expectations. By doing this, officials will earn the respect of participants, coaches, administrators and their officiating colleagues.

It is important to remember that the competition in which the official is officiating is the most important competition that day to those participating in it.

There are a number of expectations of officials. These include being:

- trustworthy – honest and impartial
- responsible – have integrity and take the role seriously
- prepared for their role – prepared physically and mentally for the task
- competent – have and are further developing the skills for the task.

