



COACHES WORKING WITH OFFICIALS

Officials (referees, judges, umpires, scorers, etc.) are often placed in the unenviable position of alienating 50 per cent of the crowd and players at any given time, and can be subject to criticism, abuse and harassment. It is important to remember that officials have the same needs and motivations as others involved in sport and that they have a critical role to play in ensuring the safe and fair management of competition.

Coaches can help to minimise the abuse of officials and maximise the standard of officiating by developing positive and supportive relationships with officials.

It is important that coaches are good role models to participants in regard to how officials are treated. A coach who abuses or berates an umpire is giving the message to participants that this type of behaviour is acceptable. Coaches should display professionalism in their behaviour towards officials and encourage participants to do the same. The coach should warn and/or counsel a participant who behaves abusively towards an official.

Tips for working with officials

- A meeting with officials at the beginning of the season is a good idea. The coach can use this opportunity to introduce themselves and any support staff, to get to know the officials (get to see the human side) and to start developing open lines of communication away from the heat of competition.
- Invite officials along to pre-season team functions or meetings, where appropriate, in formal capacities – to explain any new rules, how competitions will run – and informal capacities – so that athletes and others involved in the program get to know them as people and not just as the face on the other end of the whistle or flag.
- Maintain open and positive lines of communication throughout the year – discuss any issues, as they arise, in an open and non-threatening manner away from the heat of competition. In this way the coach can help reduce the risk of small points of contention becoming major issues, minimise the abuse of officials and help ensure competitions are played in a safe and fair manner for the enjoyment of all involved.

- **Display professionalism in your behaviour towards officials, and encourage participants to do the same.**
- **Invite officials to pre-season meetings.**
- **Maintain open and positive lines of communication throughout the year with officials.**

