

International Referee Development Program

Referee Consistency Guide



Foreword

A referee's ability to be consistent in their calls is paramount. It is what allows a team to know that a game is reffed fairly, and from beginning to end know what to expect from the referees. It is a test of how well a referee is able to adapt to the chaotic nature of a quidditch match and to retain the logic and reasoning of the rules, regardless of who is on the field. No one is above the law when it comes to the referee's judgement and no special treatment is to be given. Consistency's importance is most easily understood and explained in how it potential problems.

Potential Problems

This guide is written with the inclusion of potential problems rather than solutions, so that referees can be aware of these situations before they occur. If a referee notices that they are officiating in an inconsistent manner, then the only possible solution is to do their best to return to a consistent style of refereeing in ensuring that both teams are being fairly officiated.

Team Precedent Bias

When a referee is presiding over a game there is a desire to ensure a game is safe and that no team gets away with foul play. This, however, can go to an extreme if the referee is not careful. In a game of Red Team vs Blue Team there are a couple situations where a referee may officiate inconsistently to achieve this goal. Doing so only leads to an unfairly officiated game filled with angry players, spectators, and coaches.

First, let us assume that Red Team fouls Blue Team, the Head Referee administers the punishment accordingly and the game continues. However, now the Head Referee can find themselves not treating the teams as they were treated before the foul. Two possible situations typically arise in this type of inconsistency: either the Head Referee becomes stricter on physical interactions, fouls, and other potential illegal actions committed by Red Team, or become less strict with those same actions when committed by Blue Team.

Neither of these are the correct course of action. The Head Referee should not let how a team conducts themselves during a game affect how the rules are enforced. If a foul occurs, it should be called with no regard for a team's past interactions. Even if Red Team has received four yellow cards and Blue Team zero during a game, that fact should not cause the referee to give more warnings to Red Team or punish Blue Team more severely than the rules allow. In no case should a referee attempt to "even up" the cards thrown.

In that same vein, all referees need to ignore any information learned before the start of the game that has any possibility to influence a referee's decision. Previous experiences with a certain team, players, or even other officials should be ignored. Each game presents a chance for a team to grow and learn, but any referee who enters the game with a preconceived mindset robs a team of their ability to do so, and also damages the reputation of the referee in question and the game itself.

Gender / Size Bias

Quidditch is a coed sport that is inclusive of all genders, and all physical interactions' legality should be gauged only within the confines of the league's rule book, exceptions, and clarifications made by that league and the writers of the rule book. This is typically seen when a player who was Male Assigned At Birth ("MAAB"), engages in physical contact with another player who was Female Assigned At Birth ("FAAB"). It is not uncommon for the MAAB player who initiates any sort of hard, but legal physical interaction on a FAAB player to be punished, while the same hard, but legal physical interaction initiated by the FAAB player towards the MAAB player would receive no penalty. Additionally, there have been instances where a FAAB players may commit an illegal interactions on a MAAB player, but is not punished. Referees must guard against these types of inconsistency and punish any illegal interaction of the same or similar natures with corresponding penalties, regardless of the size or gender of the person who committed the foul.

Additionally, a similar situation can manifest when a larger player tackles, charges, pushes, or otherwise engages in any type of legal, physical contact with a smaller player. Despite the legality of the interaction however, some referees have a tendency to punish the larger player more strictly than they would a player who is smaller, simply because of the difference in size and strength. Referees must guard against these types of inconsistency and punish any illegal interaction of the same or similar natures with corresponding penalties. Even if an injury occurs, if the play was otherwise legal, no foul should be called and no card should be administered.

The biggest challenge for a referee can be appropriately and consistently enforcing an excessive force or "playing dangerously" rule. Referees should ensure both teams know ahead of time what they deem excessive force or "playing dangerously." Even if the teams do not agree with a referee's interpretation, they can have no complaints if a referee has clearly explained what they believe to be excessive force and are penalized accordingly.

Team Ranking Bias

This potential inconsistency, much like the previous section, occurs when a referee either knowingly or unknowingly provides one team with more leniency in regards to the rules. Imagine that Red Team is ranked the 5th team in the world according to a recent coaches' poll, while Blue Team has no ranking and held their first practice 5 days ago. Red Team is the clear favorite to win for anyone watching the match.

Some referees may feel inclined to allow Blue Team more transgressions before penalizing them as severely as they would an experienced team, while penalizing Red Team normally. Some players may claim to not know that a certain act was illegal, but ignorance of the rules of the game is never an acceptable excuse for a player who has committed a foul. Any player who enters an official game is subject to the rules and penalties of the league that they are playing in.

Other referees may move in the opposite direction and allow Red Team to play in a more illegal manner while also penalizing Blue Team more severely. This is sometimes seen when a team is expected to dominate a match, which also reminds us of the Team Precedent Bias. Whichever the case, and whatever the reason, the referee is creating an inconsistent and unsafe atmosphere for either team. Any time that a referee is not acknowledging and penalizing all fouls on an equal scale, there is a greater potential for injury and unsatisfied players.

Addressing Inconsistency

The simplest and most straightforward way to address inconsistency is to immediately and completely stop the action or actions that are causing that inconsistency. Silly and simple as it may sound, this really is the only course of action. Any alternative way of combatting the inconsistency will require more inconsistent or unfair calls. While it may seem logical for a referee to decide that the best course of action is to be inconsistent in manner that will benefit the team that was initially harmed, doing so will only further damage the game as a whole. Under no circumstances should a “make-up call” be made.

Regardless of the referee’s recognition of an inconsistently officiated game, they should not, under any circumstances, admit this recognition or attempt to rectify the inconsistency to any of the players, coaches, or captains involved. If a referee chooses, they may discuss the situation at a later date with the other referees on a professional level, but should leave out specifics.

Inconsistency can be one of the harder things to address, typically because it manifests in a way that a referee may believe to be evening the field. While this may be true, and the field may be level thanks to inconsistent refereeing, if a team is playing in a legal manner and looks to win by a large margin, then the referees of the game have an obligation to allow the game to play out in that manner, even if it means a landslide victory for the team that is superior.

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